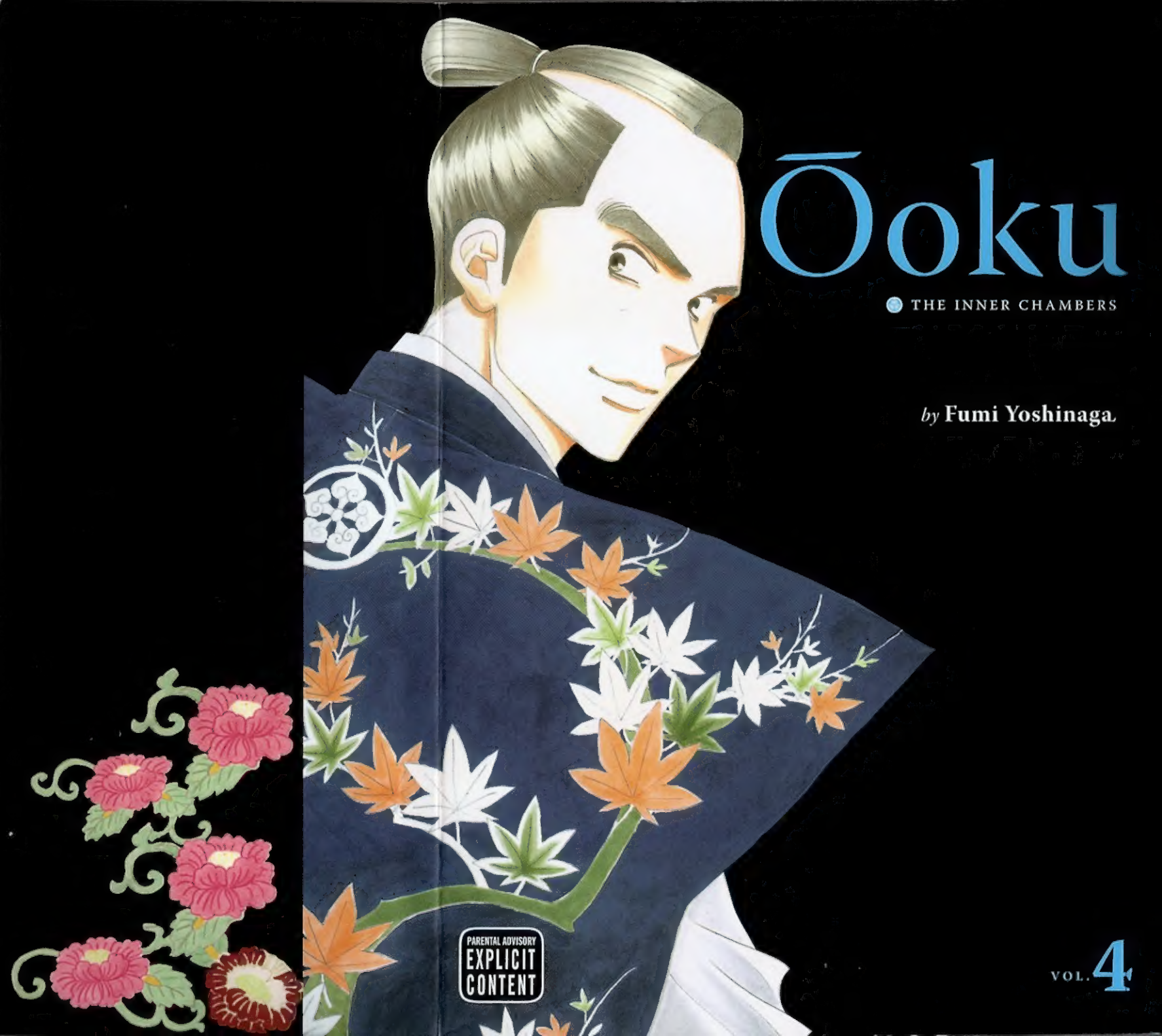
Ōoku
THE INNER CHAMBERS
by Fumi Yoshinaga
PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT
VOL. 4

DESPITE IEMITSU AND ARIKOTO'S BEST EFFORTS, there is no male heir to take over the shogunate. As the Redface Pox continues to ravage the country, it becomes increasingly clear within Edo Castle that Japan's continued existence relies on overturning the centuries of custom that define it!

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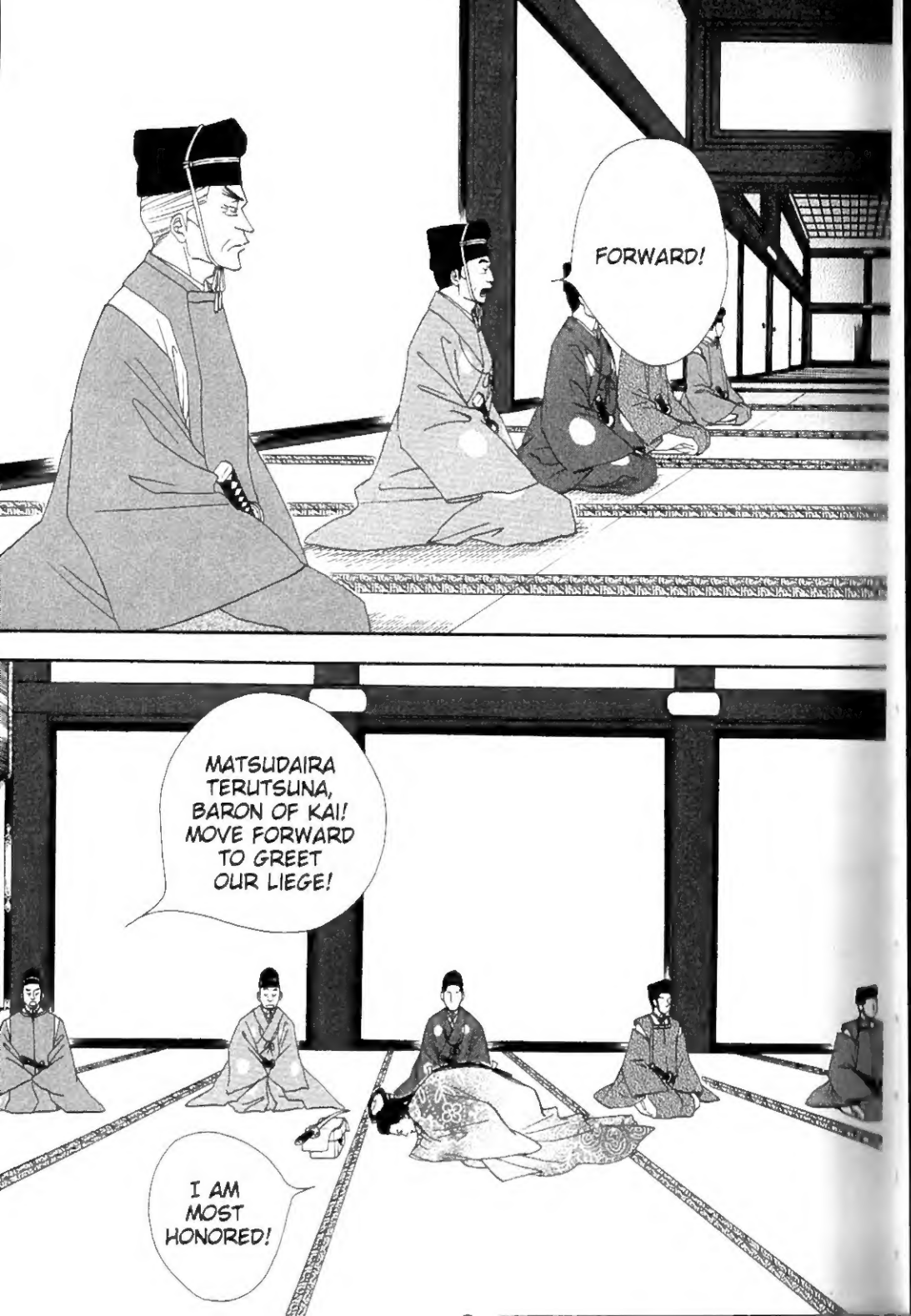
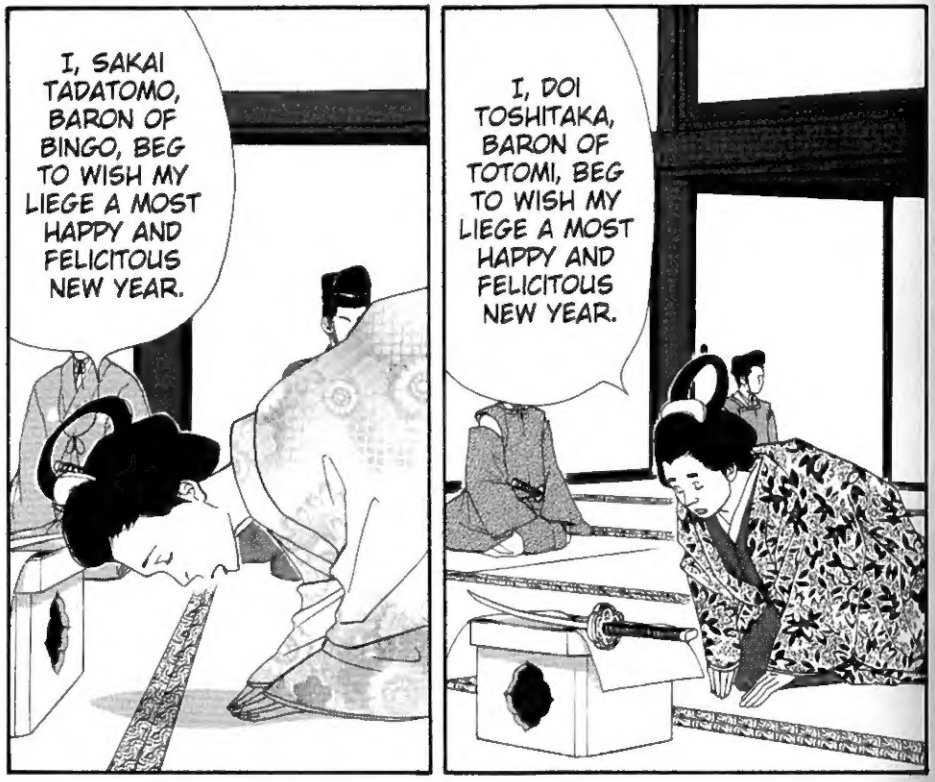
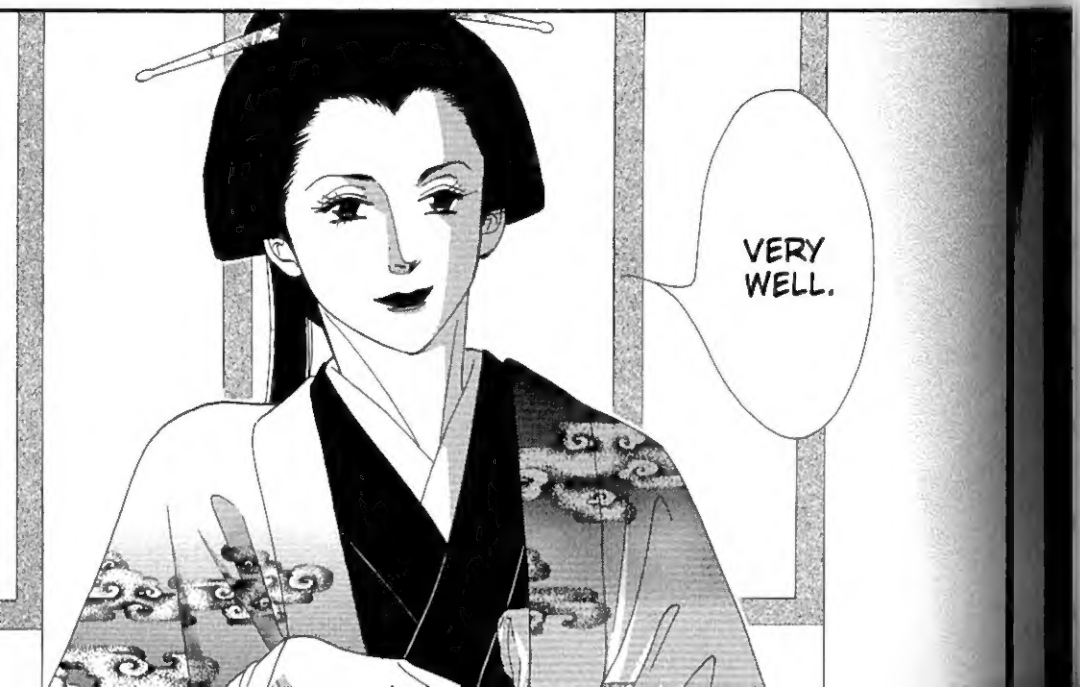
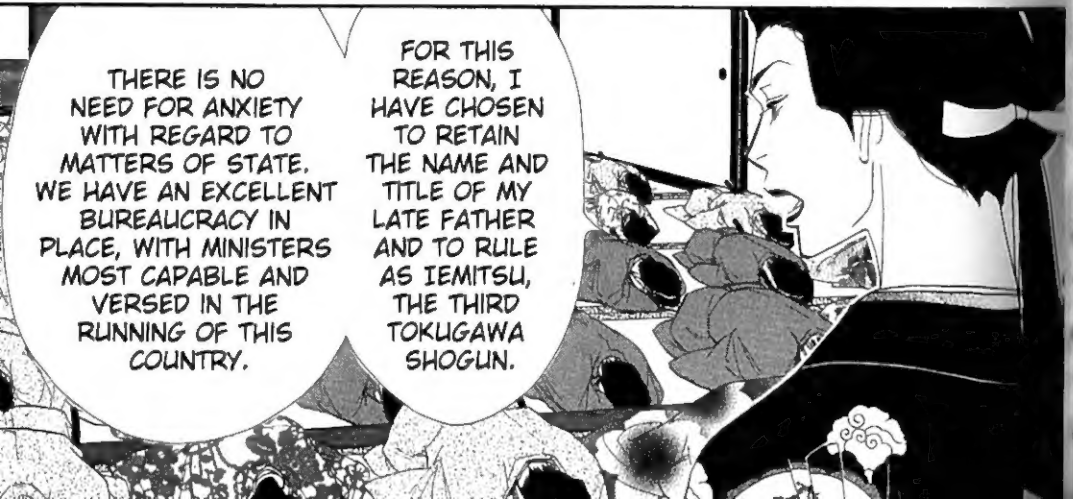

FORWARD!
MATSUDAIRA TERUTSUNA, BARON OF KAI! MOVE FORWARD TO GREET OUR LIEGE!
I AM MOST HONORED!


I, SAKAI TADATOMO, BARON OF BINGO, BEG TO WISH MY LIEGE A MOST HAPPY AND FELICITOUS NEW YEAR.
I, DOI TOSHITAKA, BARON OF TOTOMI, BEG TO WISH MY LIEGE A MOST HAPPY AND FELICITOUS NEW YEAR.

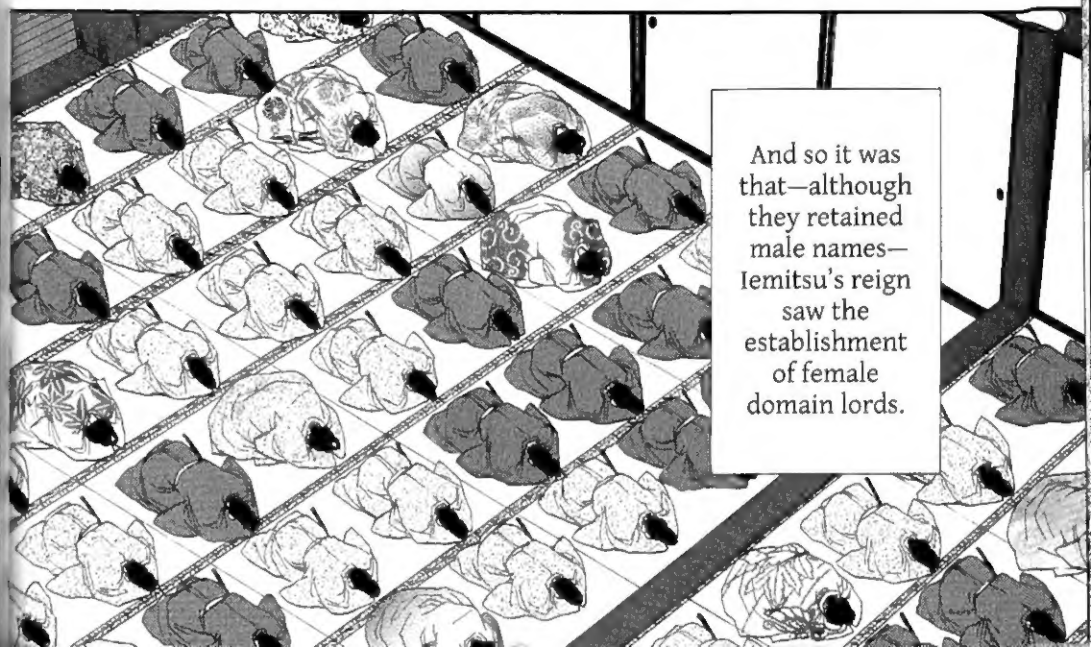

VERY WELL.

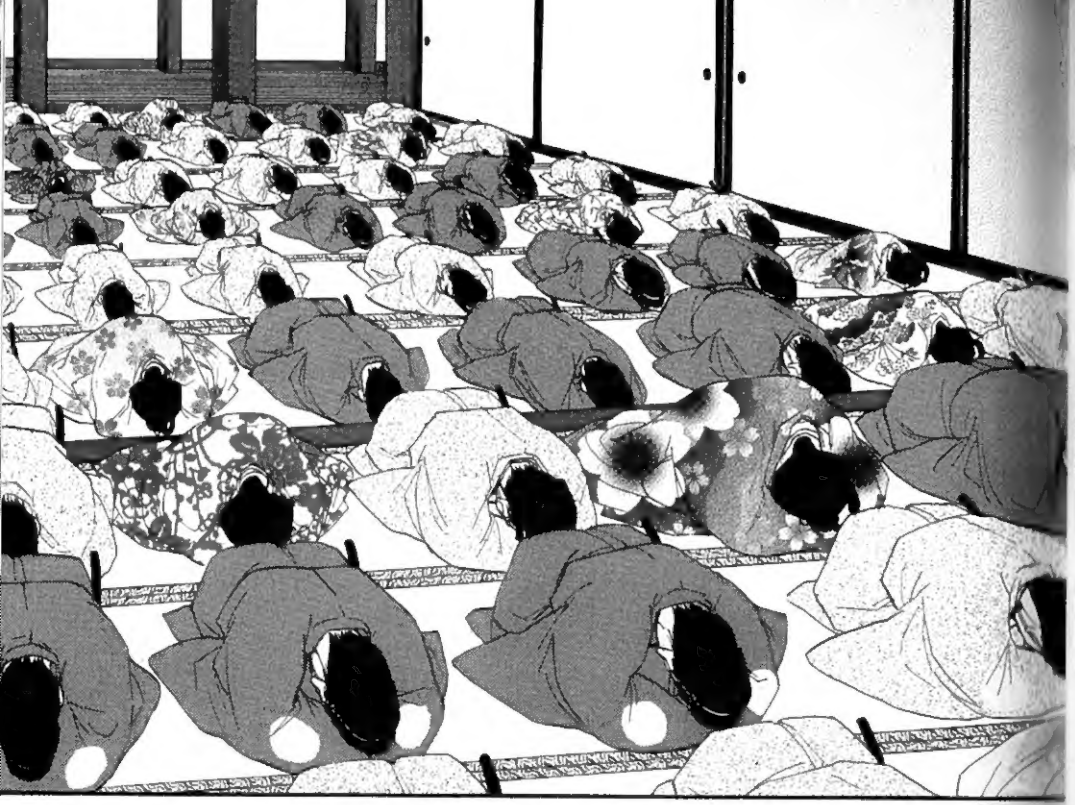
I, MATSUDAIRA TERUTSUNA, BARON OF KAI, BEG TO WISH MY LIEGE A MOST HAPPY AND FELICITOUS NEW YEAR.
Ōoku
THE INNER CHAMBERS

THIS IS, OF COURSE, MERELY A PROVISIONAL MEASURE OF LAST RESORT.
'TWILL BE IN PLACE ONLY UNTIL THE MALE POPULATION HATH REGAINED ONCE MORE ITS PREVIOUS NUMBERS AND MEN CAN AGAIN ASSUME THEIR HEREDITARY TITLES.
THIS SHALL BE AS TRUE OF THE TOKUGAWA AS OF ANY HOUSE. LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT I OCCUPY THE SHOGUN'S SEAT AS NOTHING MORE THAN A CUSTODIAN, IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN TOKUGAWA RULE AND, THUS, PEACE THROUGHOUT THE REALM.


FOR THIS REASON, I HAVE CHOSEN TO RETAIN THE NAME AND TITLE OF MY LATE FATHER AND TO RULE AS IEMITSU, THE THIRD TOKUGAWA SHOGUN.
THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANXIETY WITH REGARD TO MATTERS OF STATE. WE HAVE AN EXCELLENT BUREAUCRACY IN PLACE, WITH MINISTERS MOST CAPABLE AND VERSED IN THE RUNNING OF THIS COUNTRY.

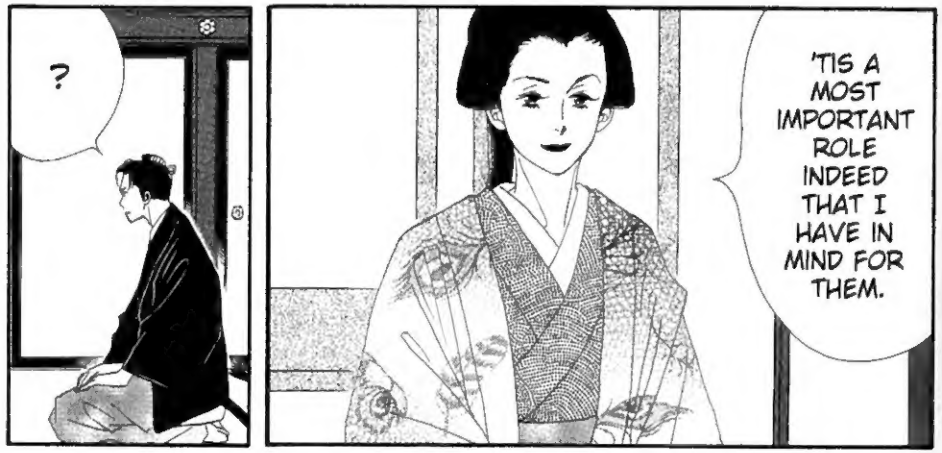
Fu
Sss
h

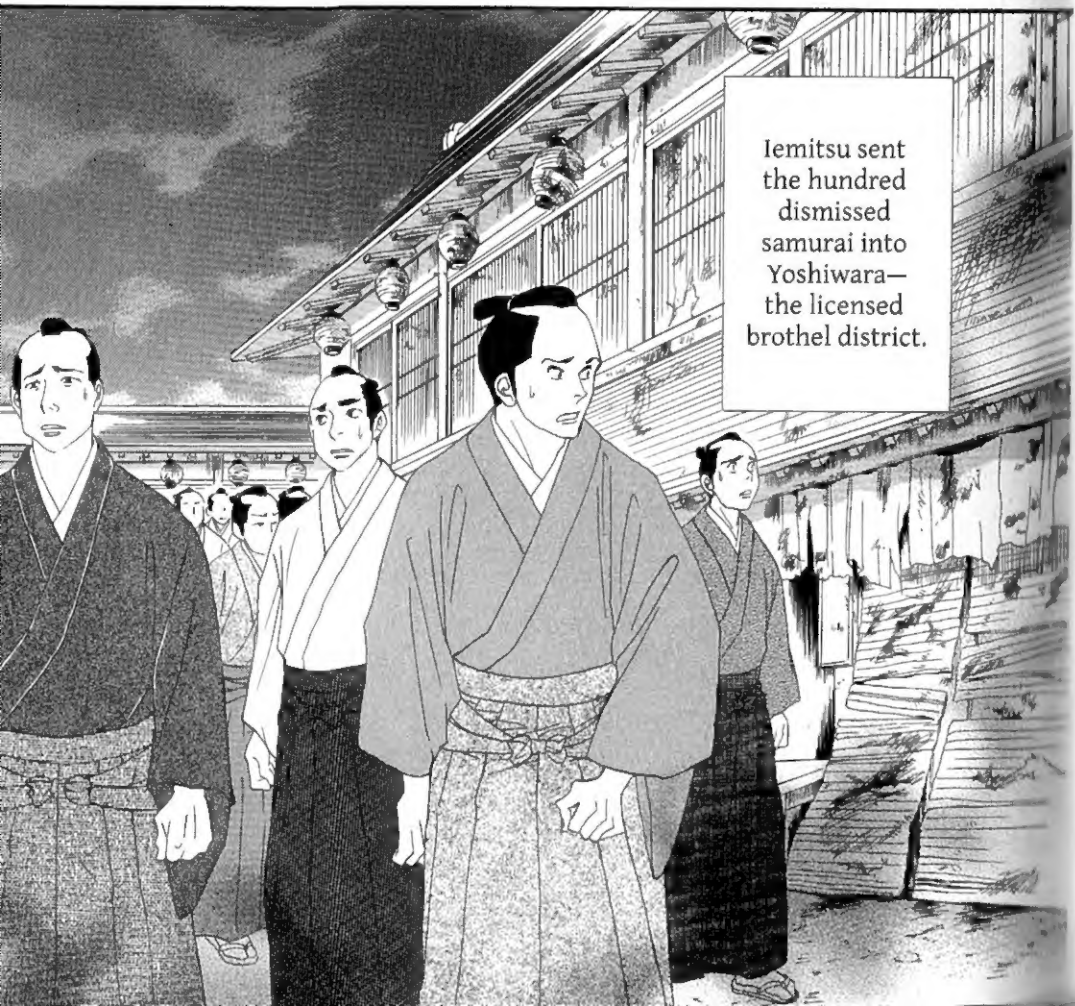

And so it was that—although they retained male names—Iemitsu's reign saw the establishment of female domain lords.

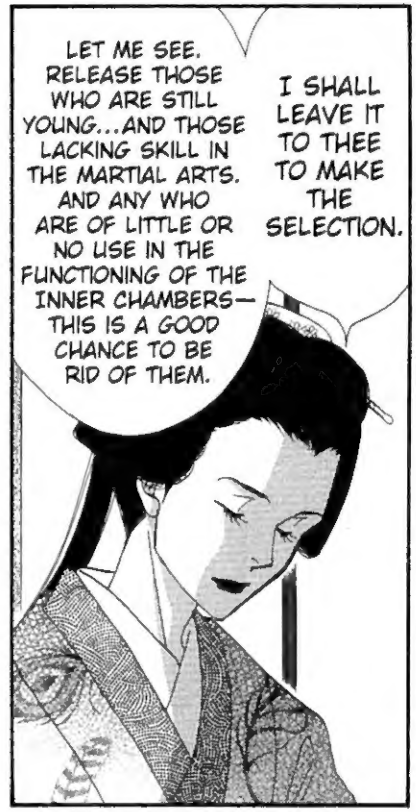


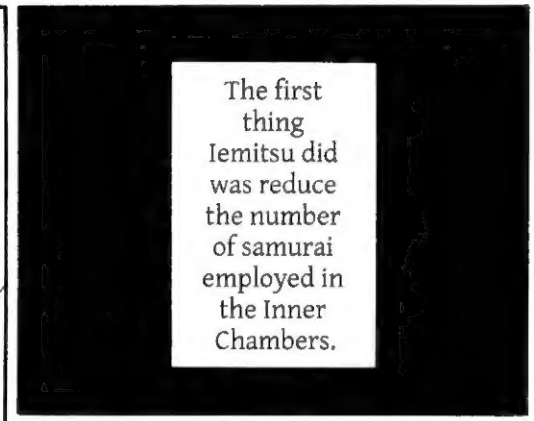
Not one voice was raised in protest.

I WAS BORN INTO THIS WORLD FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONTINUING THE TOKUGAWA REIGN— A SHOGUN IN NAME ONLY, AND IN FACT A HUMAN SACRIFICE!
IF IT SHOULD COME TO PASS THAT MEN CONTINUE TO DECLINE IN NUMBER AND THIS LAND DOTH FALL INTO RUIN, THEN I TOO SHALL PERISH WITH IT!
NOW, IS THERE ANYONE HERE WHO DOTH OBJECT TO MY ASSUMING THE TITLE OF SHOGUN?!

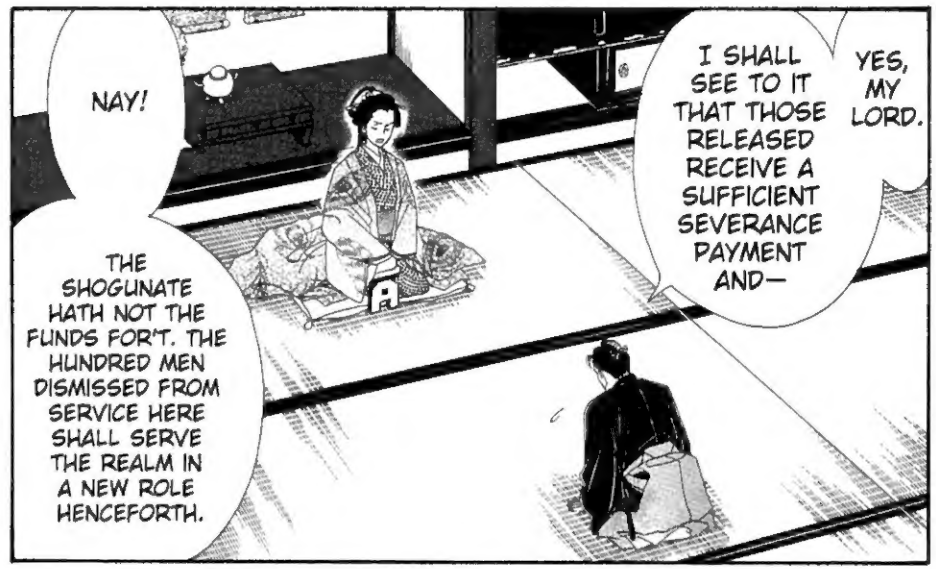

?
'TIS A MOST IMPORTANT ROLE INDEED THAT I HAVE IN MIND FOR THEM.

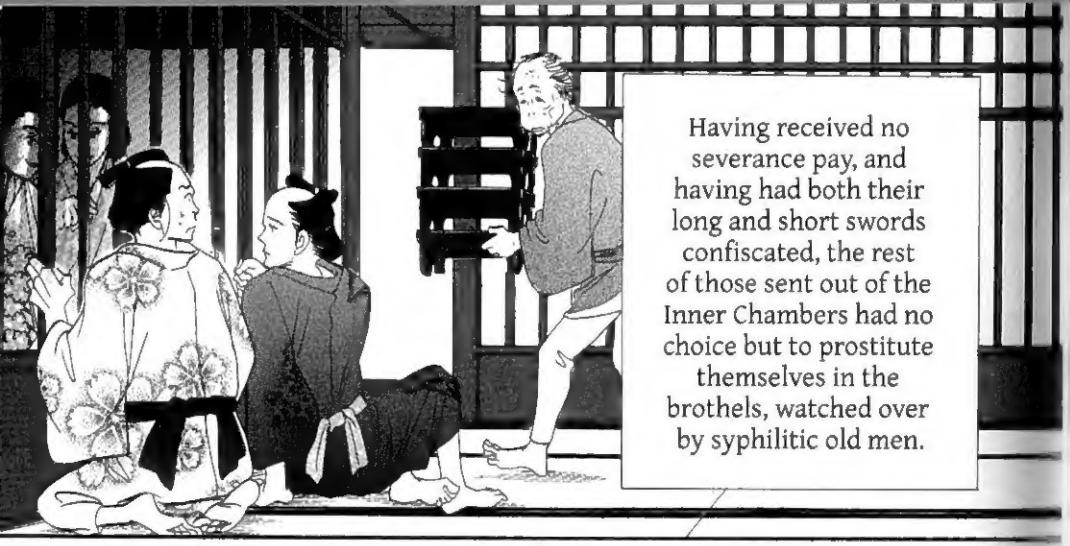

Iemitsu sent the hundred dismissed samurai into Yoshiwara—the licensed brothel district.

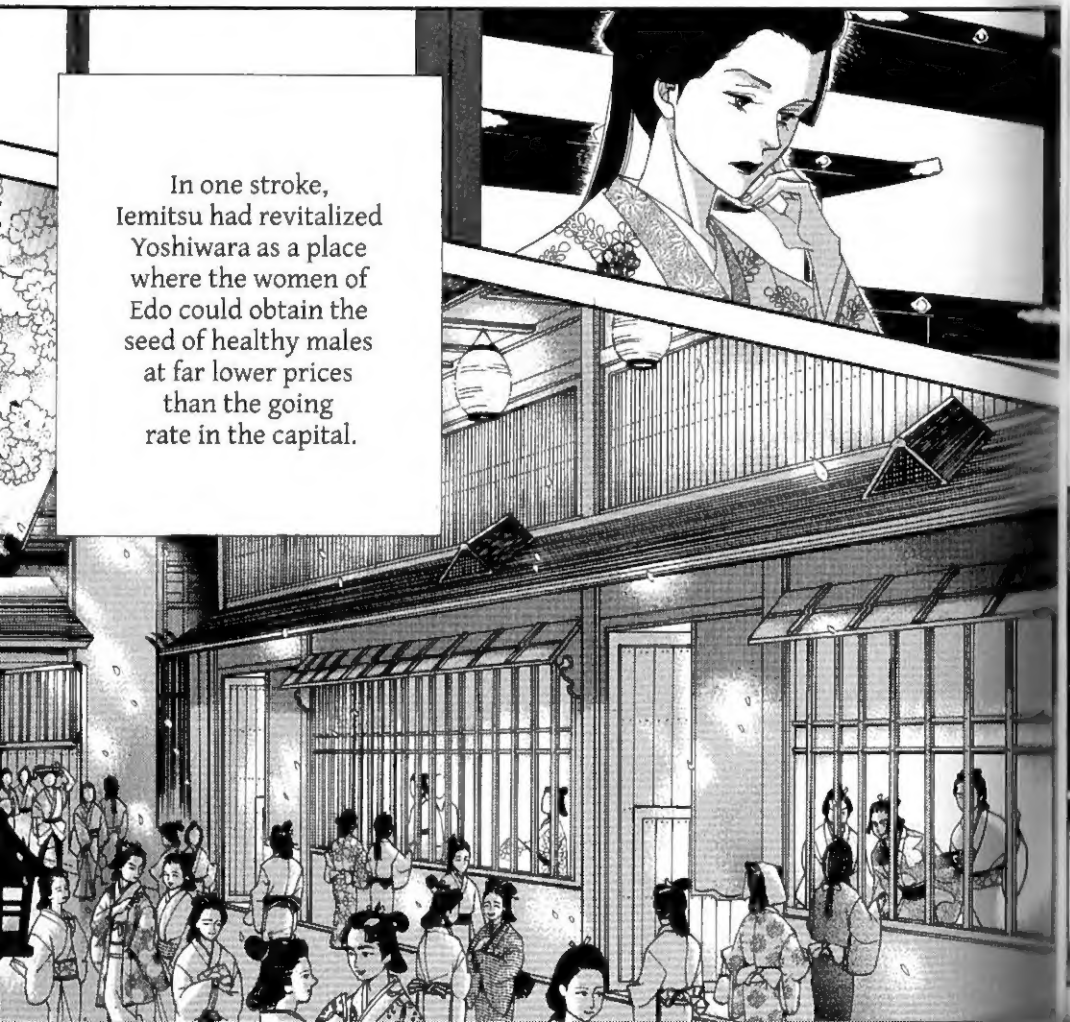

LET ME SEE. RELEASE THOSE WHO ARE STILL YOUNG...AND THOSE LACKING SKILL IN THE MARTIAL ARTS. AND ANY WHO ARE OF LITTLE OR NO USE IN THE FUNCTIONING OF THE INNER CHAMBERS—THIS IS A GOOD CHANCE TO BE RID OF THEM.
I SHALL LEAVE IT TO THEE TO MAKE THE SELECTION.


The first thing Iemitsu did was reduce the number of samurai employed in the Inner Chambers.

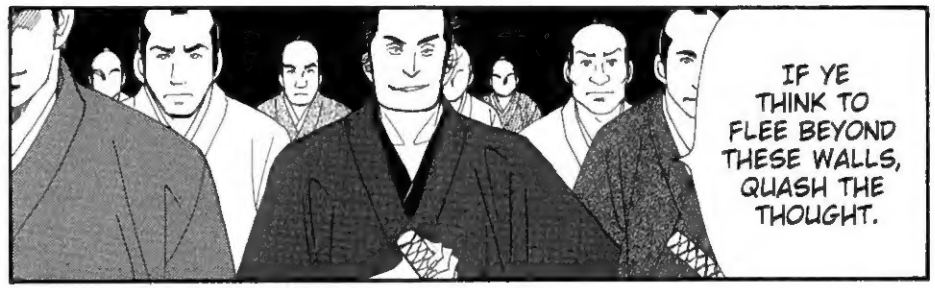
DISMISS ONE HUNDRED MEN, MY LORD?

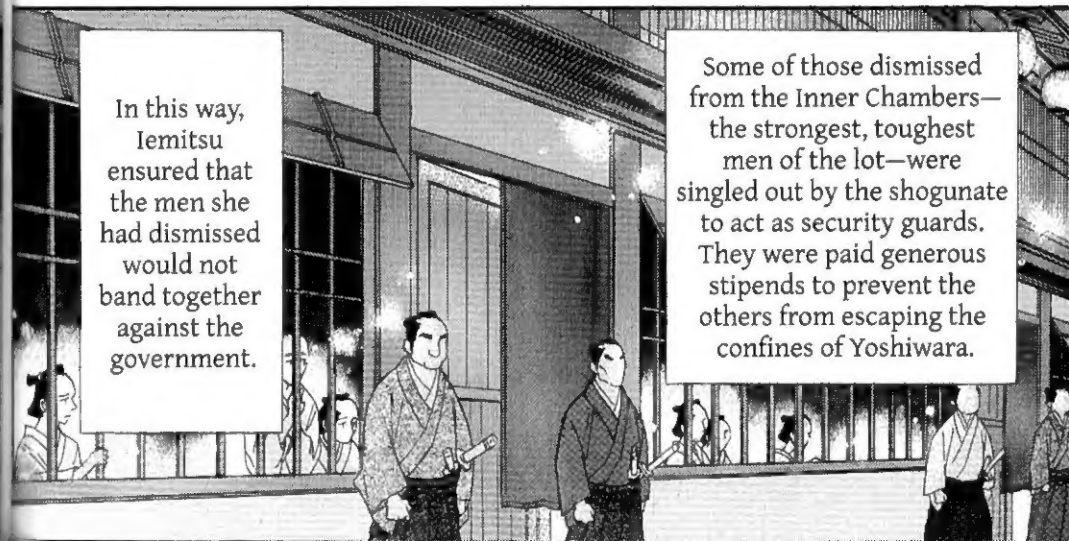

NAY!
THE SHOGUNATE HATH NOT THE FUNDS FOR'T. THE HUNDRED MEN DISMISSED FROM SERVICE HERE SHALL SERVE THE REALM IN A NEW ROLE HENCEFORTH.
I SHALL SEE TO IT THAT THOSE RELEASED RECEIVE A SUFFICIENT SEVERANCE PAYMENT AND—
YES, MY LORD.

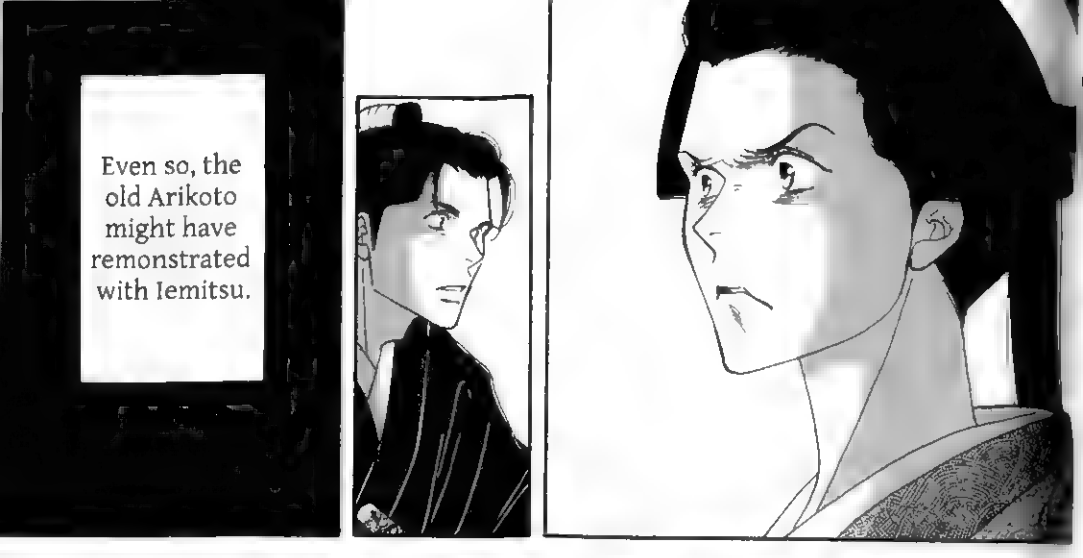

Having received no severance pay, and having had both their long and short swords confiscated, the rest of those sent out of the Inner Chambers had no choice but to prostitute themselves in the brothels, watched over by syphilitic old men.


In one stroke, Iemitsu had revitalized Yoshiwara as a place where the women of Edo could obtain the seed of healthy males at far lower prices than the going rate in the capital.

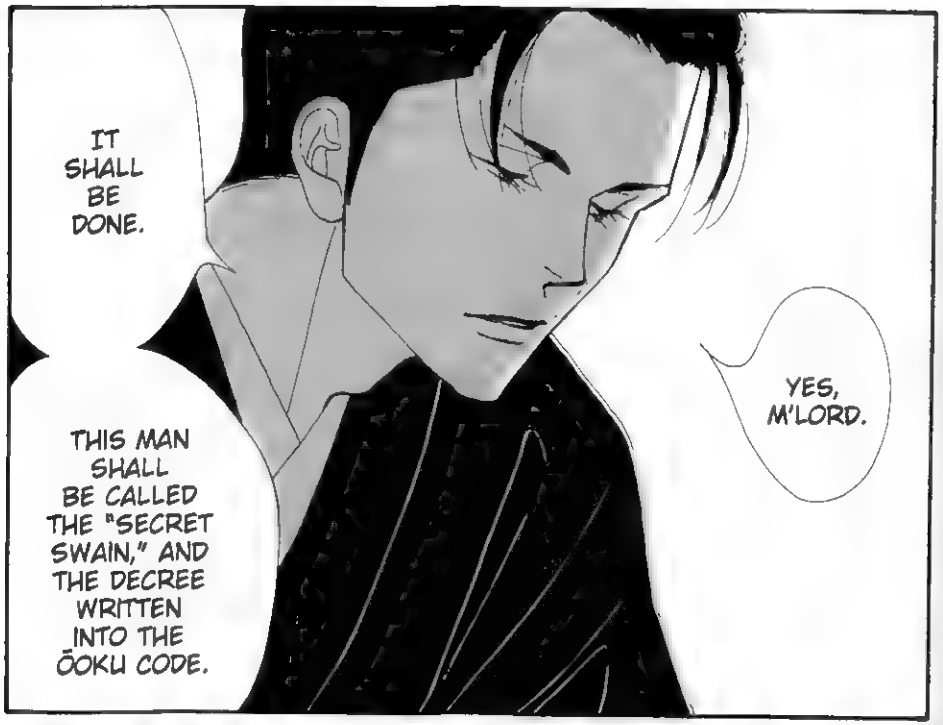
HALT, SIRS!
I SHALL NOT STAY. 'TIS NOT...
I...


IF YE THINK TO FLEE BEYOND THESE WALLS, QUASH THE THOUGHT.


In this way, Iemitsu ensured that the men she had dismissed would not band together against the government.
Some of those dismissed from the Inner Chambers—the strongest, toughest men of the lot—were singled out by the shogunate to act as security guards. They were paid generous stipends to prevent the others from escaping the confines of Yoshiwara.


Even so, the old Arikoto might have remonstrated with Iemitsu.

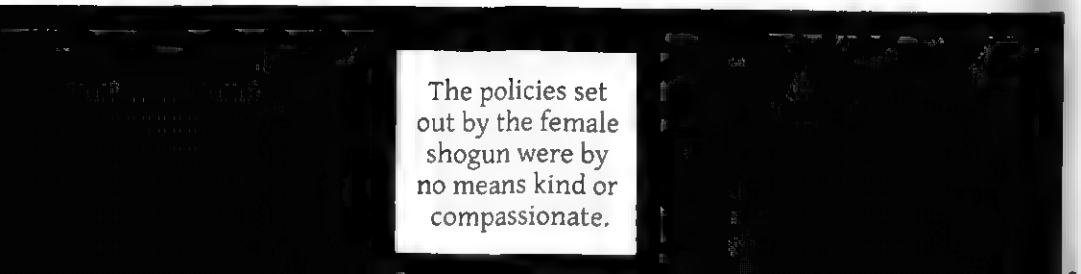
IF, IN FUTURE, THERE E'ER BE ANOTHER FEMALE SHOGUN, THE FIRST MAN TO LIE WITH HER SHALL BE CHOSEN FROM AMONG THOSE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS.
AND ARIKOTO... THIS IS REGARDING PROTOCOL IN THE INNER CHAMBERS.
YES, M'LORD...

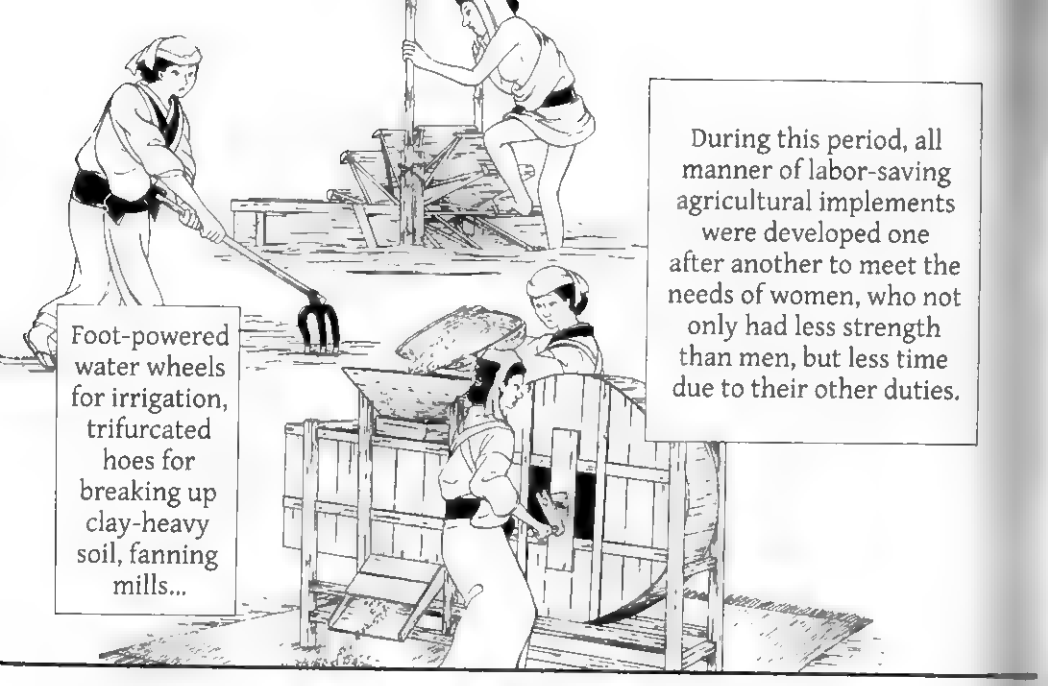

IT SHALL BE DONE.
THIS MAN SHALL BE CALLED THE "SECRET SWAIN," AND THE DECREE WRITTEN INTO THE ŌOKU CODE.
YES, M'LORD.

!

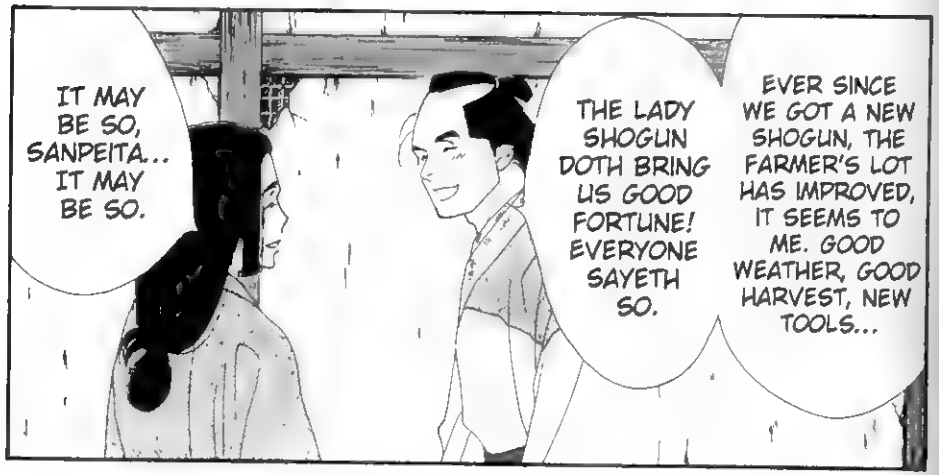
AND THEN IT SHALL BE DECREED THAT THIS SWAIN BE SECRETLY PUT TO DEATH.

I COULD NOT FORGIVE THE FELLOW!!
FOR THAT MAN WILL HAVE INJURED THE PERSON OF THE SHOGUN! I CAN ONLY SAY THAT WHEN IT DID HAPPEN TO ME, I COULD NOT FORGIVE THE FELLOW!
'TIS ONLY RIGHT! 'TIS JUSTICE DONE!

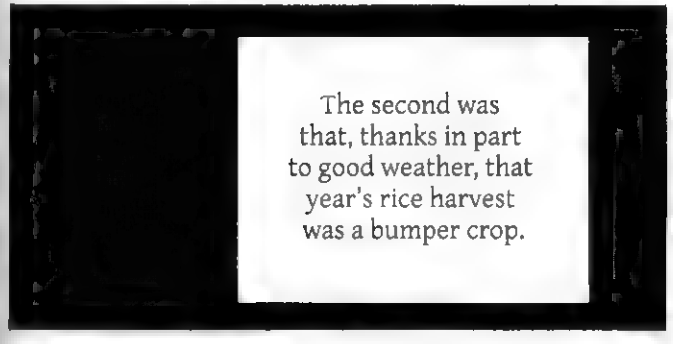

The policies set out by the female shogun were by no means kind or compassionate.

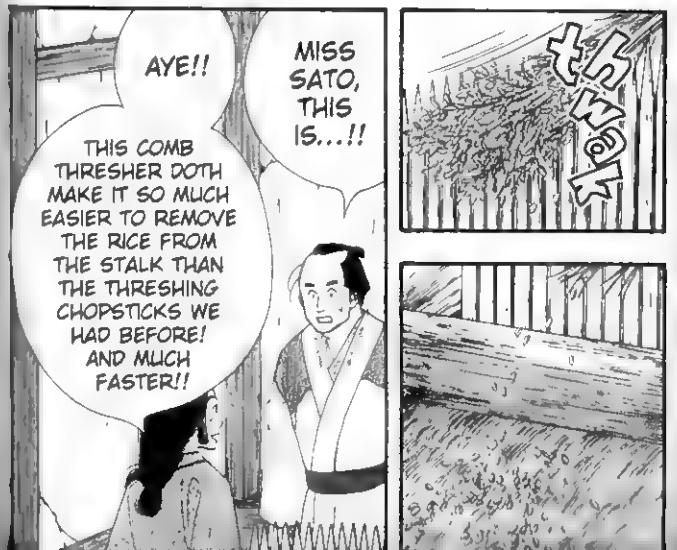

Foot-powered water wheels for irrigation, trifurcated hoes for breaking up clay-heavy soil, fanning mills...
During this period, all manner of labor-saving agricultural implements were developed one after another to meet the needs of women, who not only had less strength than men, but less time due to their other duties.

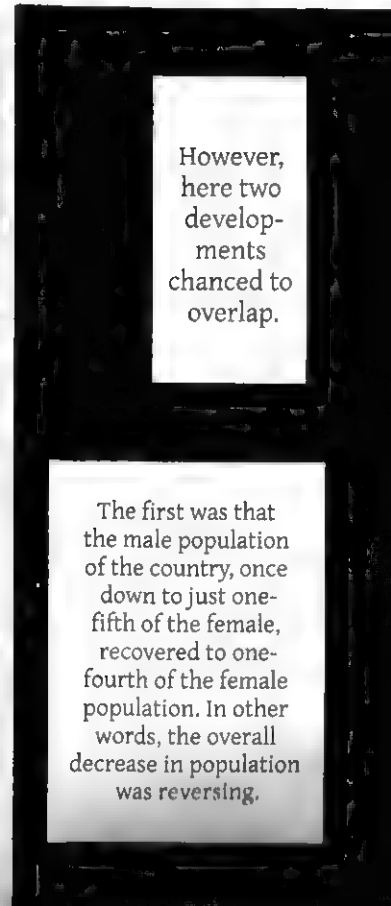
IF ALL IN OUR VILLAGE USE IT, THE WOMEN WILL HAVE MORE TIME FOR ALL THEIR OTHER CHORES...
THANKS TO THE GOOD HARVEST WE HAD THIS YEAR, WE WERE ABLE TO BUY THIS COMB THRESHER.

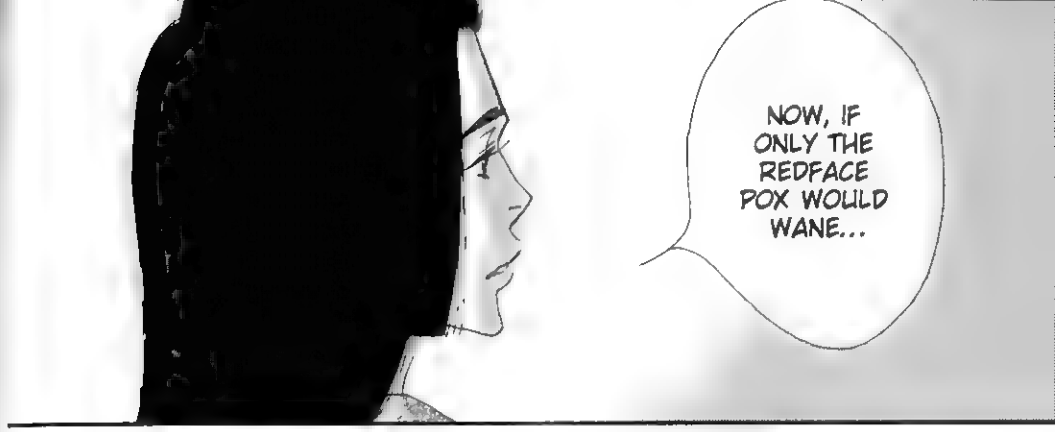

IT MAY BE SO, SANPEITA... IT MAY BE SO.
THE LADY SHOGUN DOTH BRING US GOOD FORTUNE! EVERYONE SAYETH SO.
EVER SINCE WE GOT A NEW SHOGUN, THE FARMER'S LOT HAS IMPROVED, IT SEEMS TO ME. GOOD WEATHER, GOOD HARVEST, NEW TOOLS...

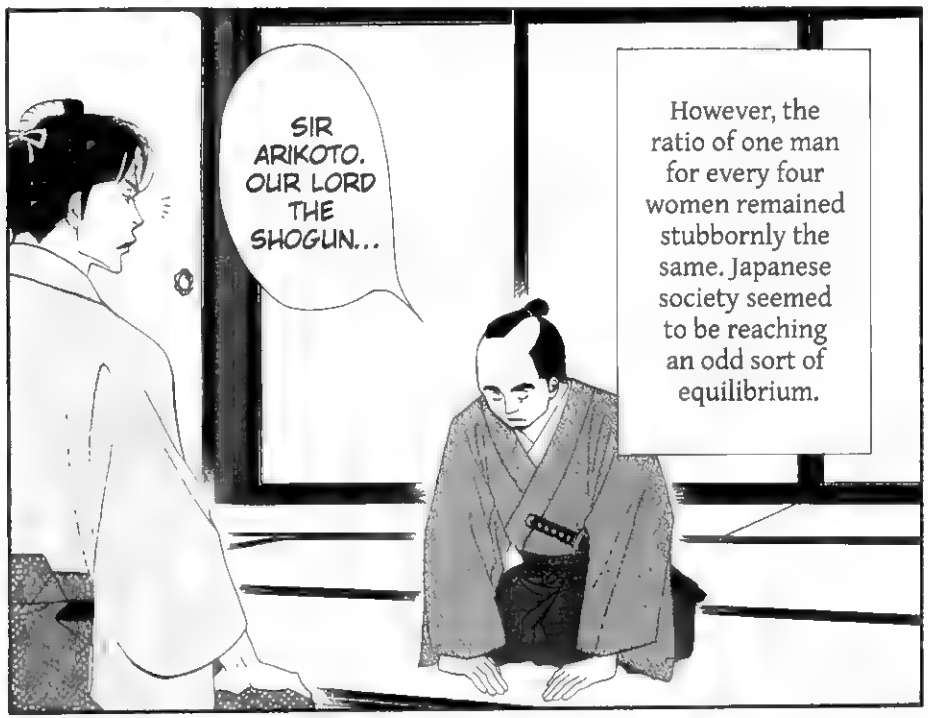
AND CONTINUE TO BE RIGOROUS IN ENFORCING THE BAN ON FARMERS EATING RICE. MAKE SURE THEY AREN'T HOARDING ANY!
FARMERS STILL ENJOY TOO MUCH LUXURY. SQUEEZE THEM FURTHER.

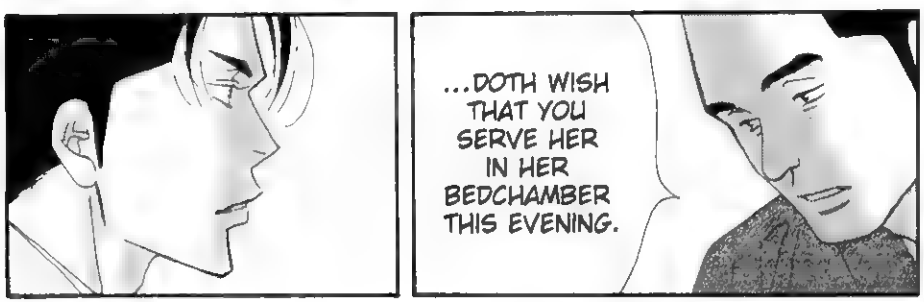

The second was that, thanks in part to good weather, that year's rice harvest was a bumper crop.

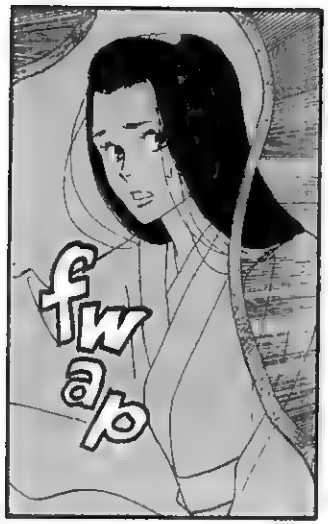

AYE!!
MISS SATO, THIS IS...!!
THIS COMB THRESHER DOTH MAKE IT SO MUCH EASIER TO REMOVE THE RICE FROM THE STALK THAN THE THRESHING CHOPSTICKS WE HAD BEFORE! AND MUCH FASTER!!
thwak


However, here two developments chanced to overlap.
The first was that the male population of the country, once down to just one-fifth of the female, recovered to one-fourth of the female population. In other words, the overall decrease in population was reversing.


NOW, IF ONLY THE REDFACE POX WOULD WANE...

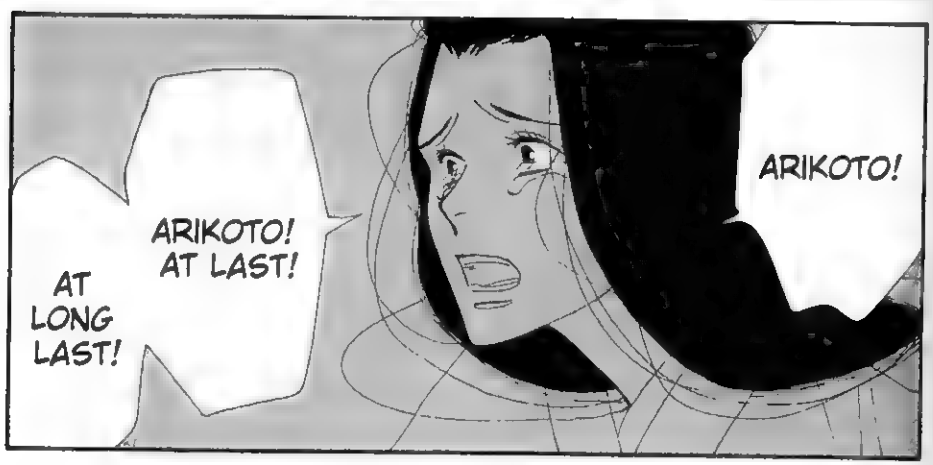

SIR ARIKOTO. OUR LORD THE SHOGUN...
However, the ratio of one man for every four women remained stubbornly the same. Japanese society seemed to be reaching an odd sort of equilibrium.


...DOTH WISH THAT YOU SERVE HER IN HER BEDCHAMBER THIS EVENING.


fwap

ARIKOTO.

MY LORD.

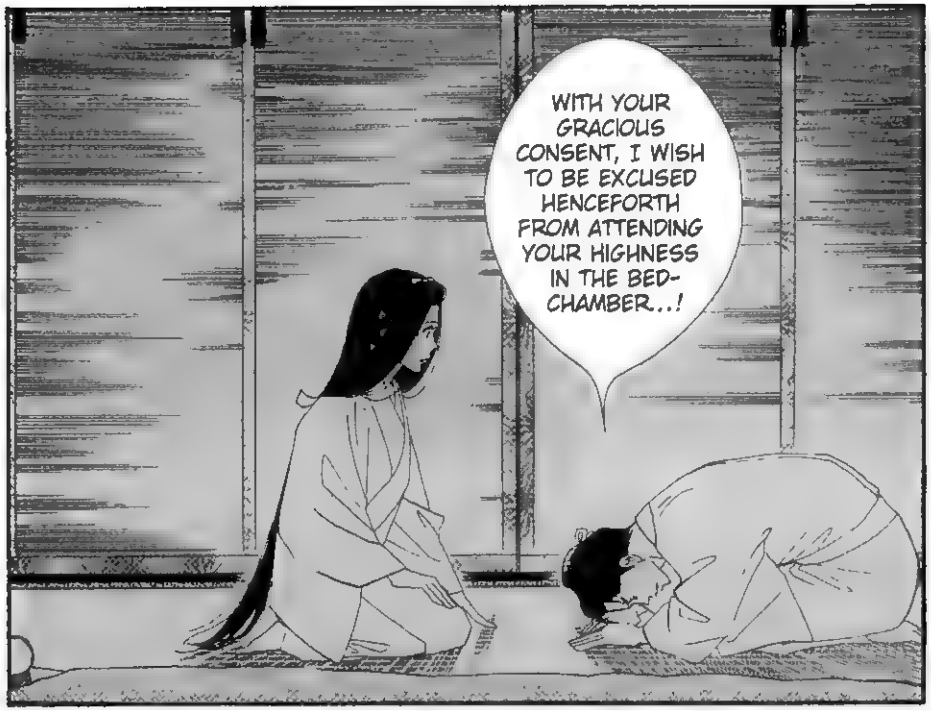

ARIKOTO!
ARIKOTO! AT LAST!
AT LONG LAST!

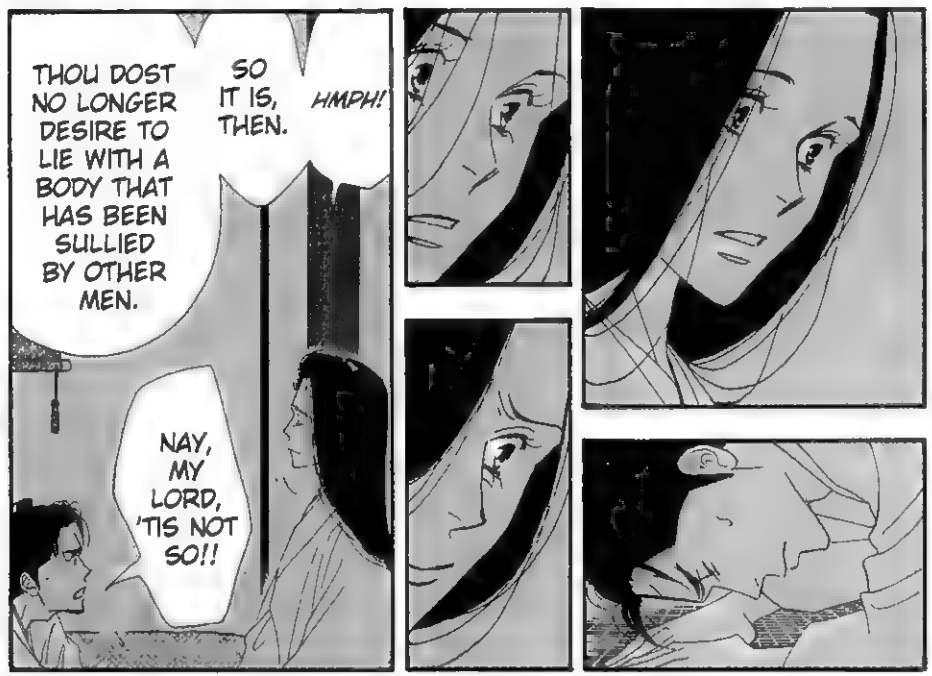
OH, ARIKOTO!

HOLD ME! NEVER LET ME GO!
ARI-KOTO!
MY LORD!

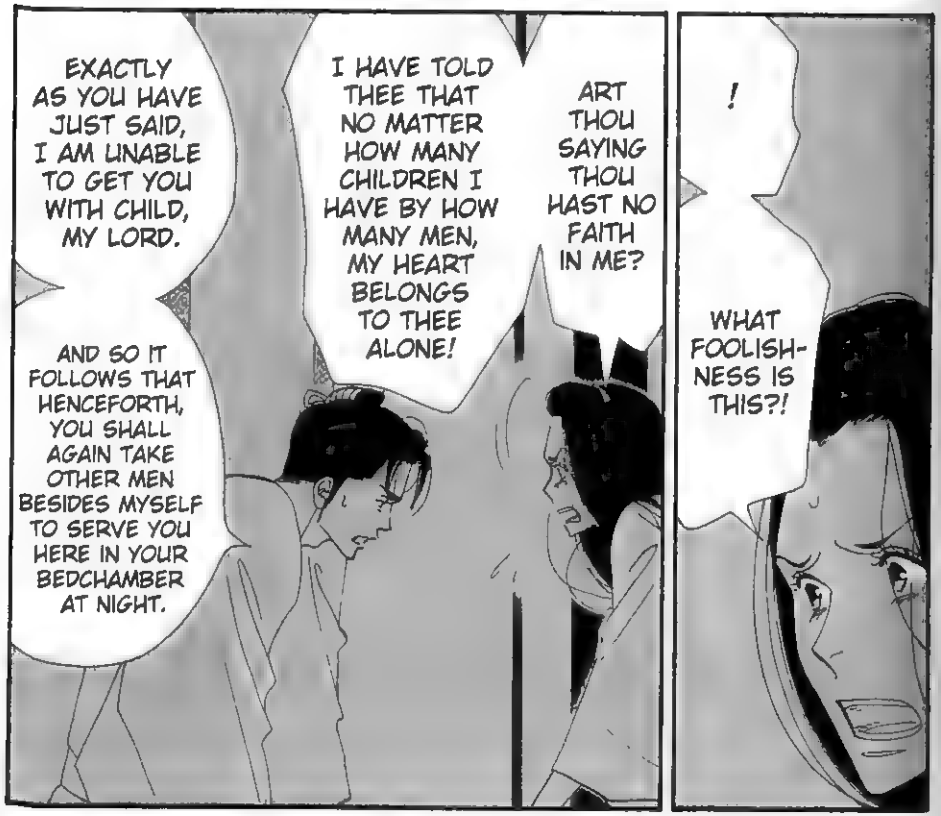
!

MY LORD.
I BESEECH YOU MOST EARNESTLY ...
ARI-KOTO...?


WITH YOUR GRACIOUS CONSENT, I WISH TO BE EXCUSED HENCEFORTH FROM ATTENDING YOUR HIGHNESS IN THE BED-CHAMBER...!


THOU DOST NO LONGER DESIRE TO LIE WITH A BODY THAT HAS BEEN SULLIED BY OTHER MEN.
SO IT IS, THEN.
HMPH!
NAY, MY LORD, 'TIS NOT SO!!

'TIS NOT SO, MY LORD.
MY REASON IS SIMPLY THAT I AM AFRAID... AFRAID TO LIVE MY LIFE CLINGING TO SOMETHING SO TENUOUS, SO SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS YOUR FEELINGS FOR ME.
I AM AFRAID...


EXACTLY AS YOU HAVE JUST SAID, I AM UNABLE TO GET YOU WITH CHILD, MY LORD.
AND SO IT FOLLOWS THAT HENCEFORTH, YOU SHALL AGAIN TAKE OTHER MEN BESIDES MYSELF TO SERVE YOU HERE IN YOUR BEDCHAMBER AT NIGHT.
I HAVE TOLD THEE THAT NO MATTER HOW MANY CHILDREN I HAVE BY HOW MANY MEN, MY HEART BELONGS TO THEE ALONE!
ART THOU SAYING THOU HAST NO FAITH IN ME?
!
WHAT FOOLISH-NESS IS THIS?!

Would Iemitsu have understood—much less consented to—this plea a few short years earlier?

BUT I AM A RED-BLOODED MALE LIKE ANY OTHER!

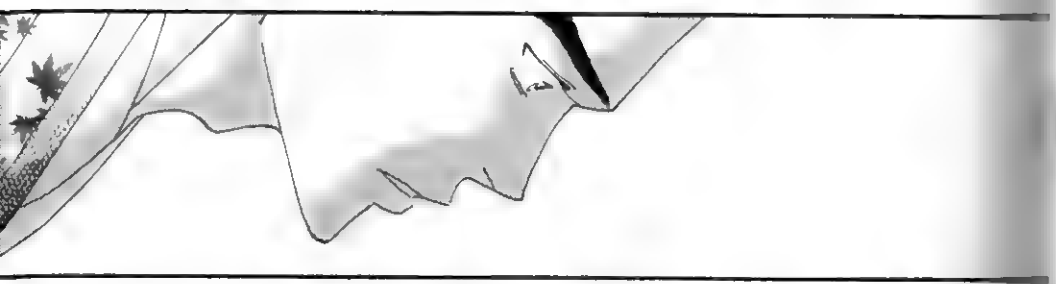
'TIS NOT ONLY YOUR HEART THAT I DO WISH TO POSSESS BUT YOUR BODY ALSO! THAT YOUR BODY DOTH NOT BELONG TO ME ALONE IS MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!

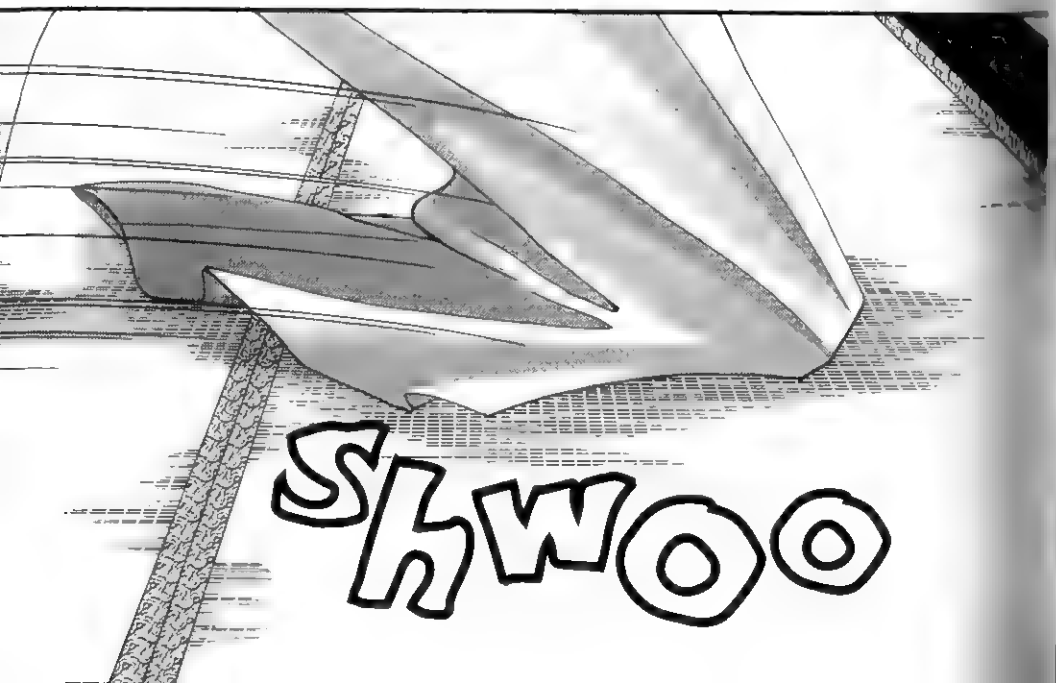
YOU HAVE YOUR CHILD TO LOVE AND CHERISH! BUT I HAVE ONLY YOU, MY LORD, AND NO OTHER!

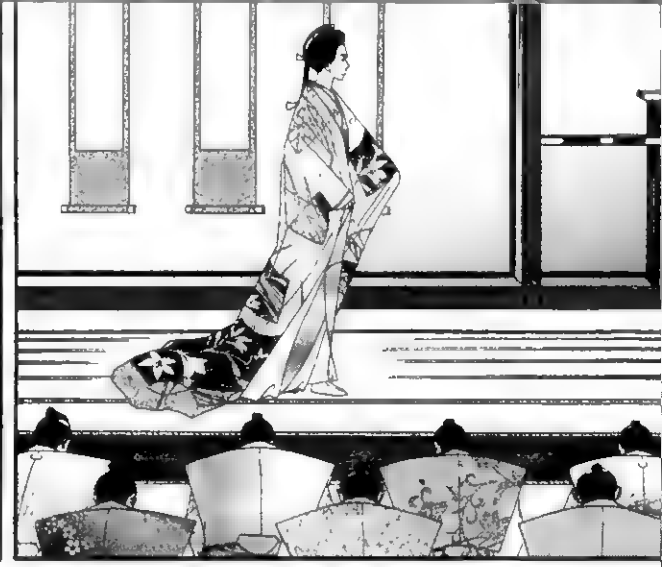
PRAY RELEASE ME FROM THE BONDS OF PASSION, FOR 'TIS KARMA MOST TERRIBLE TO BE AT ITS MERCY!

AND THAT IS WHY I DO BESEECH YOU...

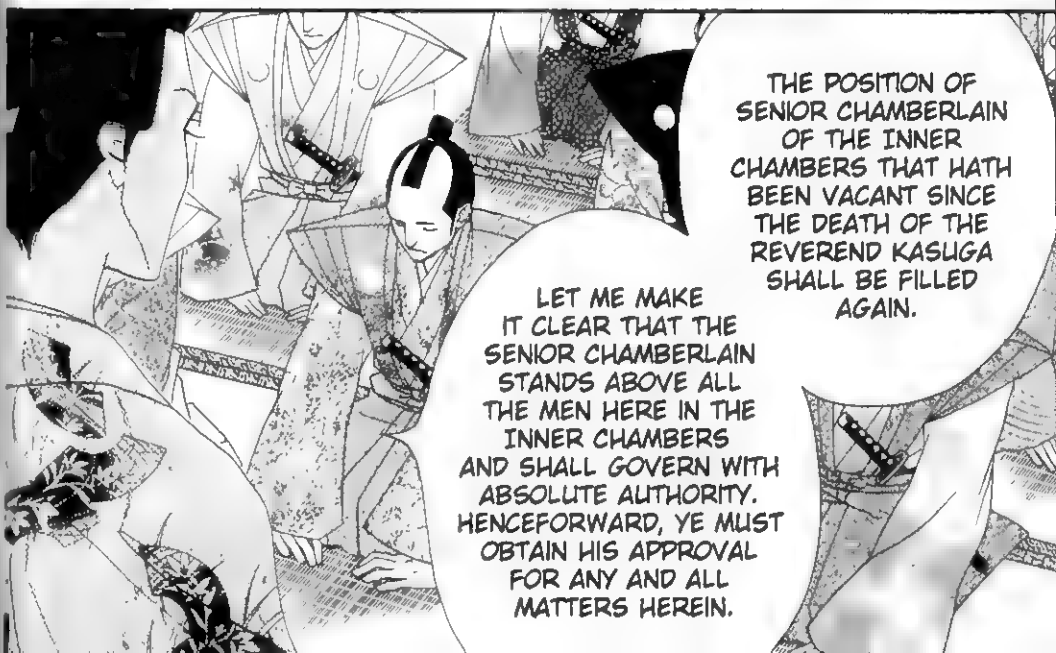
...MADENOKOJI ARIKOTO TO FULFILL THIS POSITION!
I HAVE CHOSEN...
DID O-NATSU IMPORTUNE HER HIGHNESS FOR THIS DURING ONE OF HIS TURNS IN THE BEDCHAMBER? 'TWILL BE NO LAUGHING MATTER IF HE ASSUMES THIS ROLE.







Of course, by this time all the men inside the Inner Chambers were aware that the shogun was a woman.


THE POSITION OF SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN OF THE INNER CHAMBERS THAT HATH BEEN VACANT SINCE THE DEATH OF THE REVEREND KASUGA SHALL BE FILLED AGAIN.
LET ME MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN STANDS ABOVE ALL THE MEN HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS AND SHALL GOVERN WITH ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY. HENCEFORWARD, YE MUST OBTAIN HIS APPROVAL FOR ANY AND ALL MATTERS HEREIN.

I AM MADENOKOJI ARIKOTO, THE SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN OF THESE INNER CHAMBERS.
I GIVE YOU ALL MY WARMEST GREETINGS IN THIS NEW CAPACITY.
In the long history of the Inner Chambers, O-Man was the only concubine ever to be named to the post of Senior Chamberlain.
SHWOO

Following these births, Iemitsu became pregnant again several times with other concubines, but all of these pregnancies ended with miscarriages.

...the country's first female shogun, who had played an active role in governing the country while undergoing numerous births and miscarriages—who had lived as though she were pouring her very life into the realm—died at the tender age of twenty-seven.

And then, in the fourth year of the Keian era (1651)...

MMMMGH!!

Iemitsu considered herself a "shadow" shogun to the last—nothing more than a temporary anomaly.

In the official Tokugawa history, Arikoto's name is nowhere to be found. All of the shogun's concubines are mentioned only by their feminine names.

WORD HAS JUST ARRIVED THAT TWO OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL OF SIX—SIR HOTTA MASAMORI, BARON OF KAGA, AND SIR ABE SHIGETSUGU, BARON OF TSUSHIMA—HAVE FOLLOWED OUR LORD TO THE GRAVE BY TAKING THEIR OWN LIVES!

SIR ARIKOTO.

WHAT?!

In accordance with her own last wishes, her death was recorded in official documents as that of her father's.

By this time, however, hardly anyone had any objection to the fourth Tokugawa shogun being a woman.

After her firstborn, Lady Chiyo, Iemitsu gave birth to one child each with O-Natsu and O-Tama, but both of these were daughters as well.

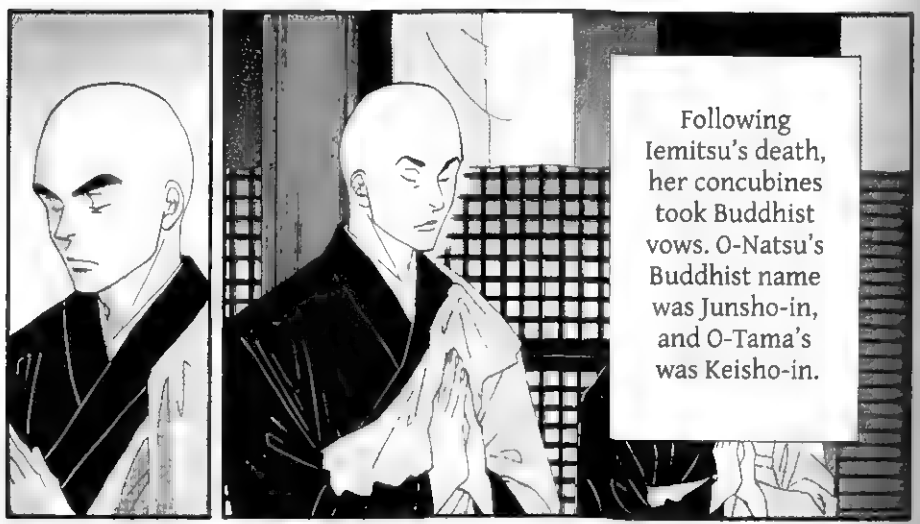
THE BABY WAS BORN SAFE AND SOUND, YOUR HIGHNESS! 'TIS A LITTLE LADY!

Ungyaaaa Ungyaaaa

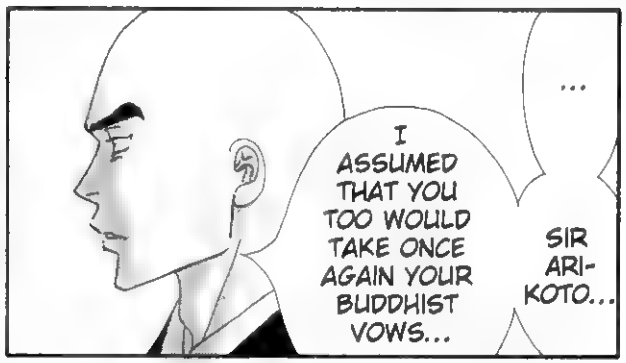
AH... AYE.

SIR MASA-KAT-SU!!
shwap
...!!

NOT YOU TOO...
AH, INABA MASAKATSU... WERE YOU ALSO AMONG THE MANY MEN IN LOVE WITH OUR LORD...?

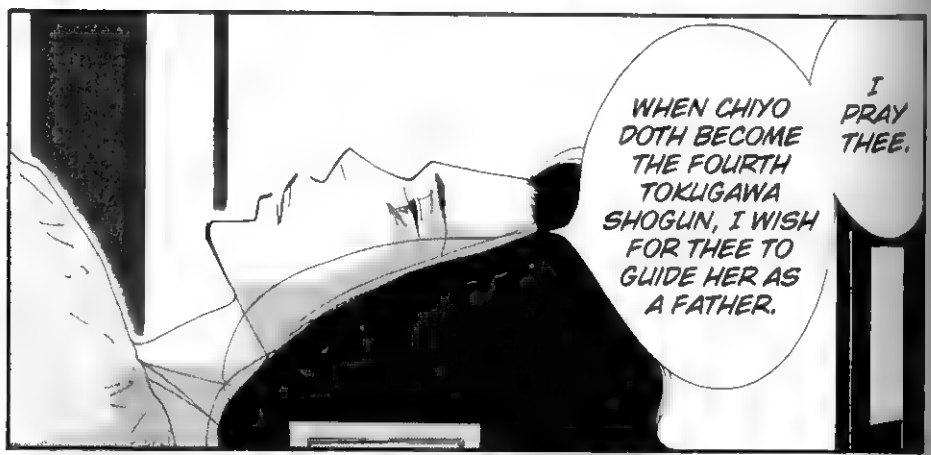

Following Iemitsu's death, her concubines took Buddhist vows. O-Natsu's Buddhist name was Junsho-in, and O-Tama's was Keisho-in.

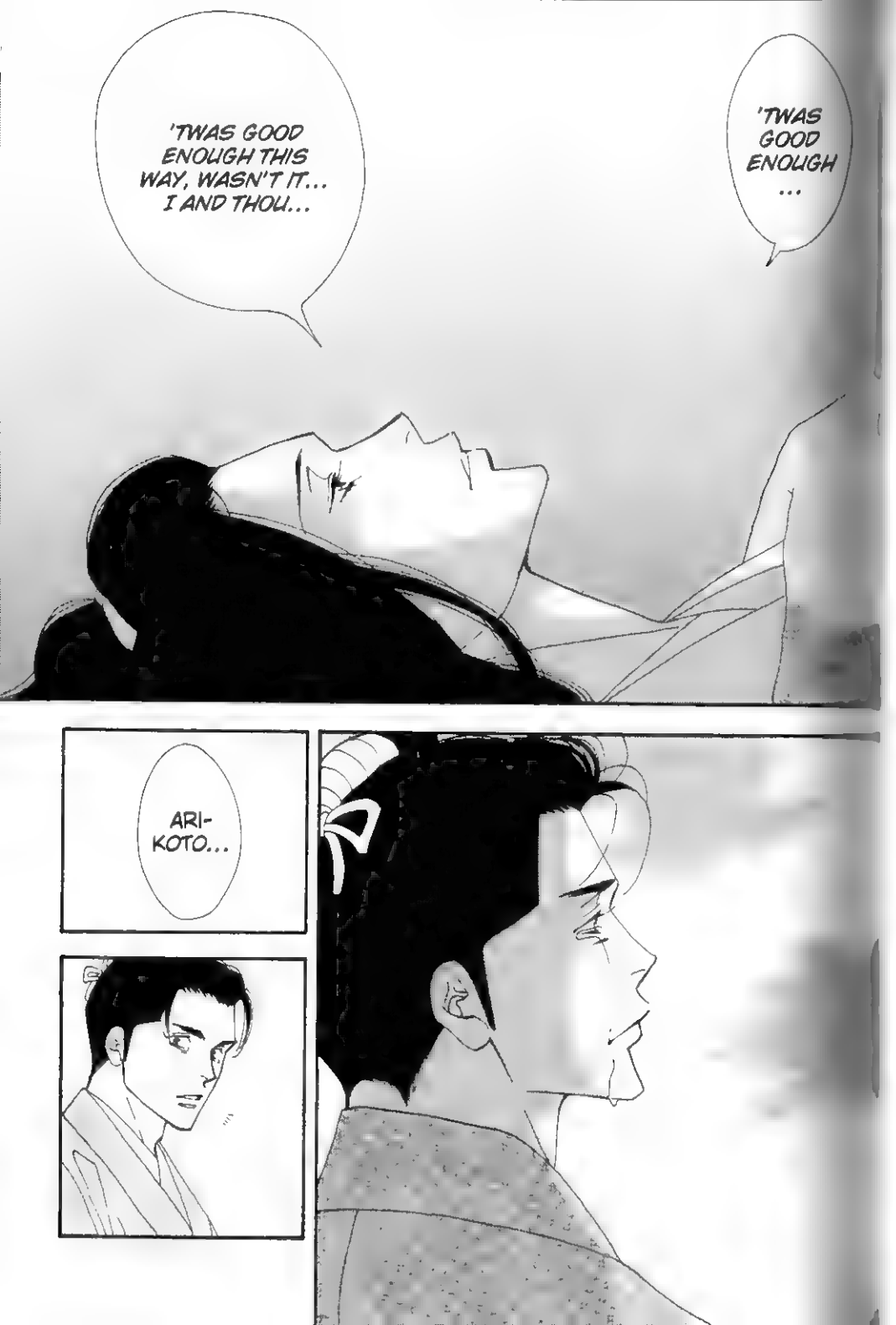
I AM HAPPY TO HEAR'T ...
SO I AM A MONK ONCE MORE. 'TIS REFRESHING TO HAVE MY HEAD SHAVED CLEAN AGAIN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

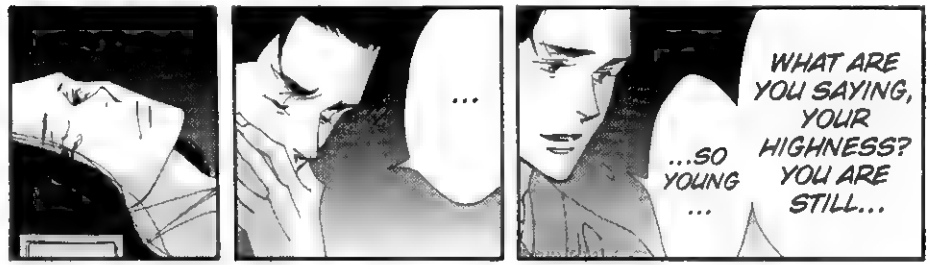

I ASSUMED THAT YOU TOO WOULD TAKE ONCE AGAIN YOUR BUDDHIST VOWS...
...
SIR ARI-KOTO...

ARIKOTO.

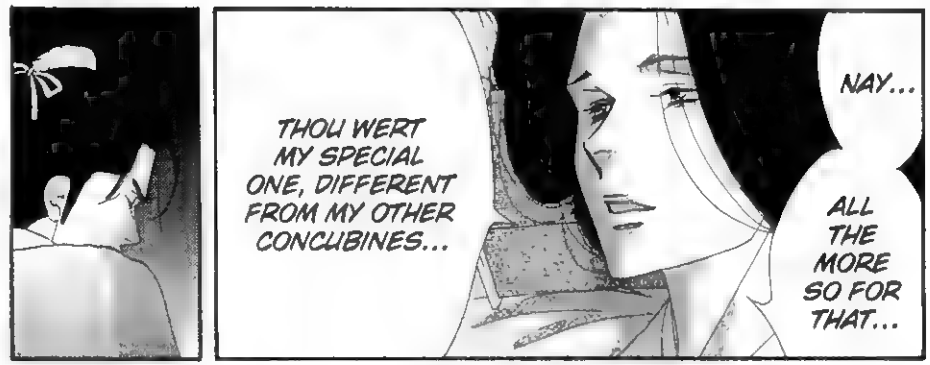
WHEN I WAS FIRST BROUGHT HERE TO THE INNER CHAMBERS, IT WAS ALL I WANTED—TO BECOME A MONK ONCE MORE...
'TIS MOST STRANGE, INDEED.
I WISH TO HAVE THEE REMAIN IN THE INNER CHAMBERS EVEN AFTER I AM DEAD AND GONE.


WHEN CHIYO DOTH BECOME THE FOURTH TOKUGAWA SHOGUN, I WISH FOR THEE TO GUIDE HER AS A FATHER.
I PRAY THEE.


'TWAS GOOD ENOUGH THIS WAY, WASN'T IT... I AND THOU...
'TWAS GOOD ENOUGH ...
ARI-KOTO...


...
...SO YOUNG ...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, YOUR HIGHNESS? YOU ARE STILL...

I LOVED THEE...
THOU WERT THE ONLY ONE I E'ER DID DESIRE.
EVEN AFTER WE NO LONGER DID LIE TOGETHER...
ARIKOTO.
M' LORD.

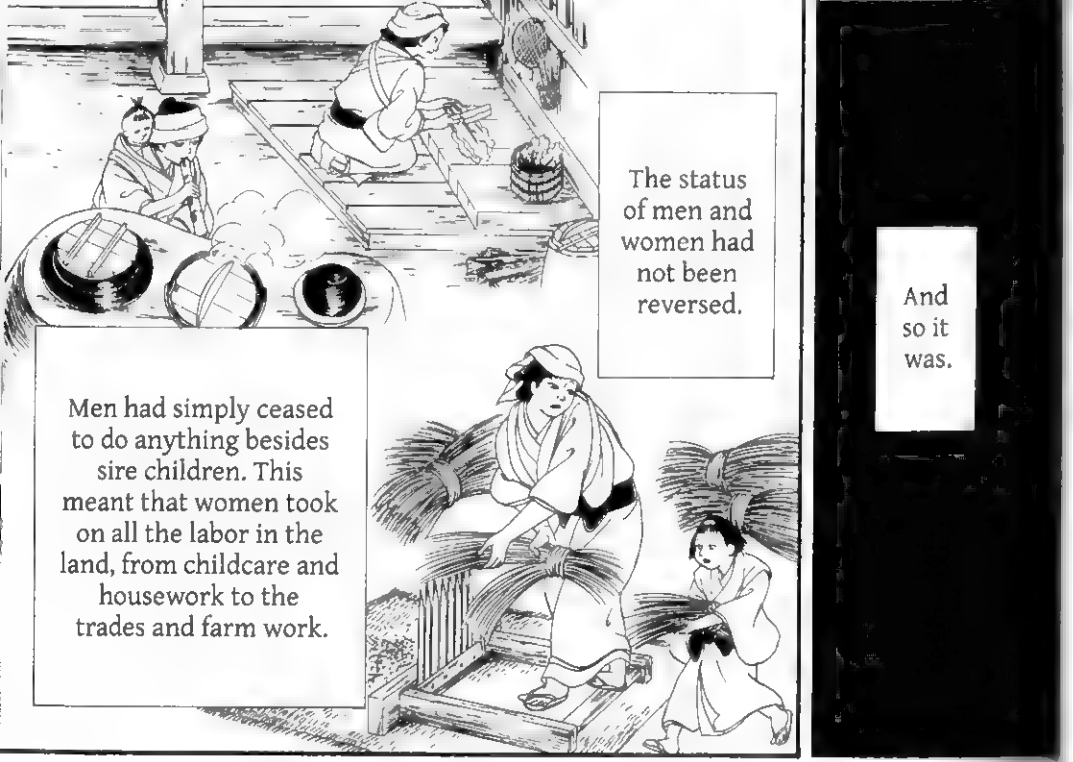

THOU WERT MY SPECIAL ONE, DIFFERENT FROM MY OTHER CONCUBINES...
NAY...
ALL THE MORE SO FOR THAT...

Arikoto would remain in the Inner Chambers for many years afterwards, reigning as Senior Chamberlain at its very pinnacle.
WHAT SAY YOU TO THIS? THE AMOUNT PAID BY EACH FAMILY CORRESPONDS TO THE SIZE OF ITS FARM.
IS'T CERTAIN THAT SPREADING RAPESEED OIL OVER THE RICE FIELDS WILL KEEP THE LOCUSTS AWAY?
EVEN IF 'TIS CERTAIN, WHERE SHALL WE FIND THE MONEY TO BUY IT...?

WELL...
WHAT IS'T, YOUR HIGH-NESS?
LADY CHIYO...! THAT IS TO SAY, MY LORD!
...
AH...
WITH PLEA-SURE.
AYE.
LET US GO TO YOUR CHAMBERS AND PLAY.
I WISH TO PLAY SUGOROKU WITH THEE, ARIKOTO...

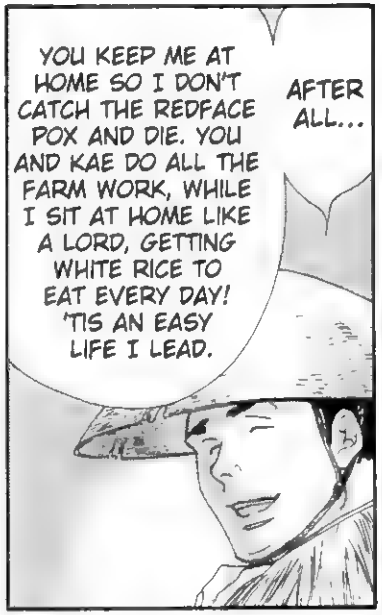
...
I SHALL FIND THE MONEY AND PAY IT!! WHAT SAY THE REST OF YOU?!
IF WE ARE TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE RICE CROP, ALL OF THE FARMS IN THE VILLAGE MUST SPREAD THE OIL AT THE SAME TIME, OR 'TWILL BE FOR NAUGHT.
MINE! SHIMA!
AYE, AND WE!
WE SHALL PAY IT TOO!
ARE YOU FORGETTING THAT WE ARE THE ONES WORKING IN THE FIELDS FROM MORN 'TIL NIGHT?!
KOROKU-SAN!
'TIS NOT FOR YOU TO DECIDE SUCH IMPORTANT MATTERS WITHOUT ASKING YOUR HEAD OF HOUSE...
ARE YE FORGETTING THAT YE BOTH HAVE GRANDADS AT HOME?!
FORSOOTH!! WHY ARE WE HERE AT THIS GATHERING IN THE FIRST PLACE, IF NOT TO STAND IN FOR OUR HEADS OF HOUSE?!

I'M HOME.
AND WELCOME, SISTER SATO.
...
...
IF THE WORLD WERE AS IT OUGHT TO BE, THOU WOULDST HAVE TAKEN A BRIDE AS HEAD OF THIS HOUSE.
INSTEAD, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT... I DO RUE IT.
WHERE GOEST THOU TONIGHT, SOTARO?
WELL THEN, NOW 'TIS MY TURN TO VENTURE ABROAD.
ONLY TO INE-SAN'S FARM, AND ONLY FOR MIYO. MASA DID CONCEIVE A SHORT WHILE AGO, SO I AM RELEASED FROM MY DUTIES WITH HER. 'TIS A HAPPY THING.
WELL, NIGHT-CRAWLING IS AN OLD CUSTOM, FROM THE WORLD AS IT WAS BEFORE!


Men had simply ceased to do anything besides sire children. This meant that women took on all the labor in the land, from childcare and housework to the trades and farm work.
The status of men and women had not been reversed.
And so it was.

THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, O-KIKU, WHO WILL BE TAKING OVER THE FAMILY TRADE...
HERE! NISUKE DOTH WISH TO HAVE THEM ALL. GIVE THINE TO THY BROTHER!
'TIS NOT FAIRRRR!! 'TIS NOT FAIR THAT MY BROTHER ALWAYS GETS THEM ALLLLL!
WELL, NISUKE IS A BOY!
Boys were raised as precious treasures in all levels of society...

SO-TARO...


YOU KEEP ME AT HOME SO I DON'T CATCH THE REDFACE POX AND DIE. YOU AND KAE DO ALL THE FARM WORK, WHILE I SIT AT HOME LIKE A LORD, GETTING WHITE RICE TO EAT EVERY DAY! 'TIS AN EASY LIFE I LEAD.
AFTER ALL...

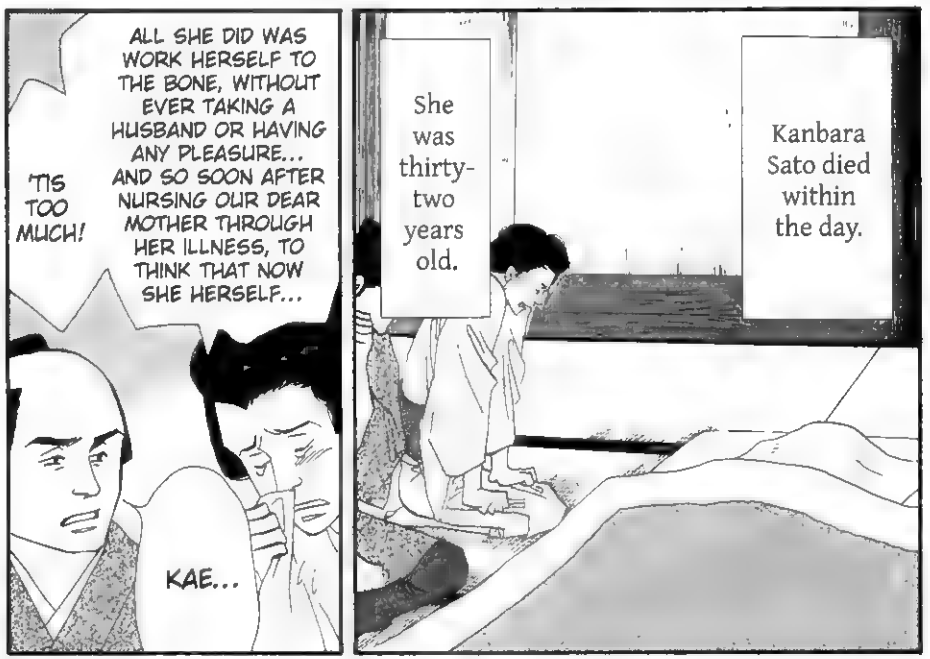
...FOR HOW ELSE IS THIS VILLAGE FULL OF OLD MAIDS TO PRODUCE THE CHILDREN IT SO SORELY NEEDS?
AND I *MUST* GO TO OUR NEIGHBORS, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT...
'TIS NO HARDSHIP FOR ME, IF I THINK OF'T AS WORK.

GOOD NIGHT, SISTER. I AM GOING.

...YOU AND SANPEITA WOULD BE WED. INSTEAD, YOU TOLD HIM IT WASN'T FAIR TO THE OTHER MAIDS IN THE VILLAGE IF YOU KEPT HIM ALL TO YOURSELF.
...AND IF THE WORLD WAS AS IT SHOULD BE...

KUNI...
YU
Style
AHH GH...
KUNI...
DIDST THOU MARK THAT, NISUKE? THE IZUTSUYA SHOP.
VERY WELL.
PRITHEE, IF YOUR SON NISUKE MIGHT COME TO OUR HOUSE IN THE EVENINGS FOR A WHILE, WE'D BE MOST GRATEFUL...
...and those like Sato, who sent their sons and brothers out "night-crawling" without payment, were few and far between.
...
AH...
...old men were nothing but useless burdens, in rural areas especially.
On the other hand...

koff
SATO!!


ALL SHE DID WAS WORK HERSELF TO THE BONE, WITHOUT EVER TAKING A HUSBAND OR HAVING ANY PLEASURE... AND SO SOON AFTER NURSING OUR DEAR MOTHER THROUGH HER ILLNESS, TO THINK THAT NOW SHE HERSELF...
'TIS TOO MUCH!
KAE...
She was thirty-two years old.
Kanbara Sato died within the day.

I SHALL LIVE ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF US, AND BEAR MANY MORE CHILDREN, AND WORK HARDER THAN EVER..
I SHALL NOT DIE!
SATO...
I'LL LIVE, I SWEAR'T!

I'LL LIVE AND LOOK AFTER THE KANBARA LANDS!

MAKE HASTE SIRS, BE AT THE READY! HER HIGHNESS THE SHOGUN SHALL BE HERE ANON!

Meanwhile, in Edo...

BOW YE DOWN...
...FOR THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LIEGE!!
THY HEAD IS TOO HIGH.
A-AYE, SIR MURASE, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR GUIDANCE!
IS EVERY-ONE READY?
The voice of Madenokoji Arikoto, Senior Chamberlain of the Inner Chambers, rang through the Passage of the Bells.
Ching
Ching
Ching
Ching
Ching
Ching

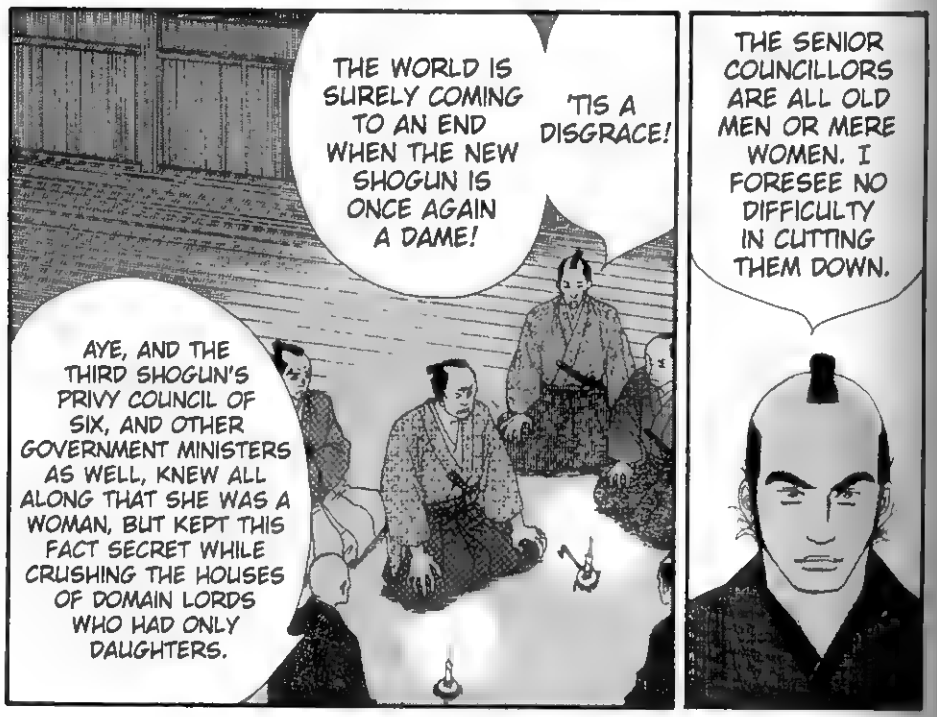
It was the reign of the fourth Tokugawa shogun, Ietsuna.

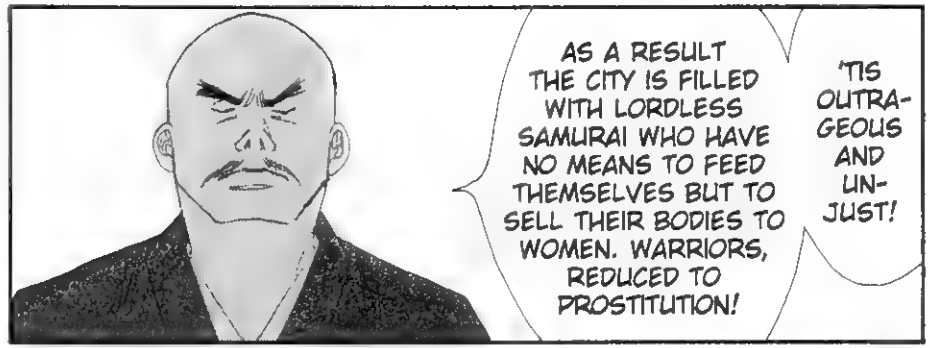
Ōoku

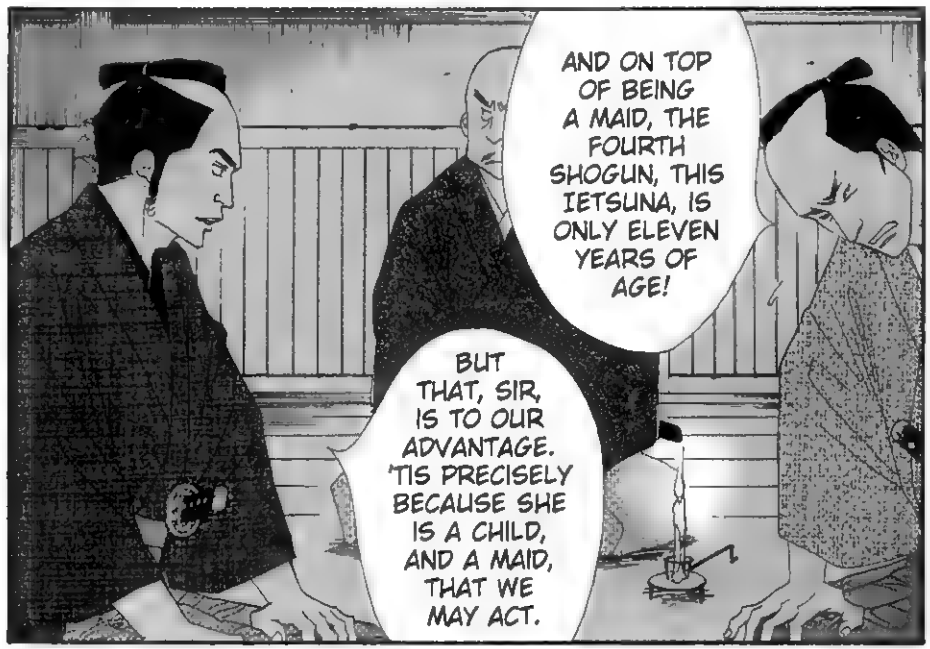
THE INNER CHAMBERS

WE CHOOSE A DAY OF STRONG WIND TO SEND FIRE THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF EDO.

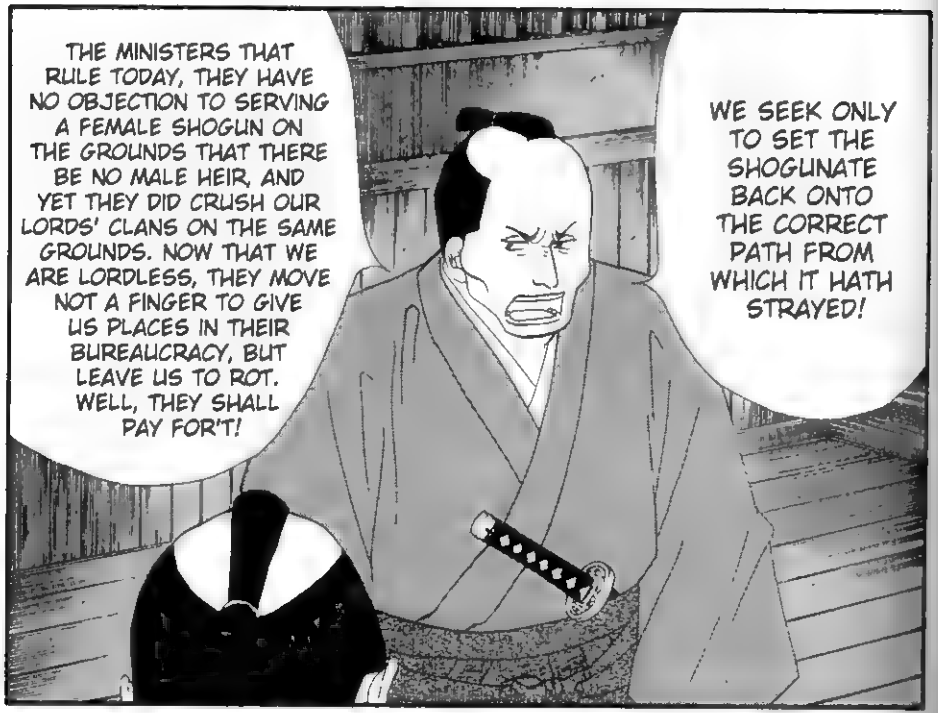
...AND LIE IN WAIT AROUND THE GATES OF EDO CASTLE, WHERE WE SLAY THE SENIOR COUNCILLORS AS THEY ARRIVE—AND THEY ARE SURE TO ARRIVE, WITH THE CITY ON FIRE AND THE GUNPOWDER EXPLODING—AND THEN WE OCCUPY THE CASTLE.
AT THE SAME TIME, WE SET FIRE TO THE GUNPOWDER REPOSITORY IN KOISHIKAWA...


THE WORLD IS SURELY COMING TO AN END WHEN THE NEW SHOGUN IS ONCE AGAIN A DAME!
'TIS A DISGRACE!
AYE, AND THE THIRD SHOGUN'S PRIVY COUNCIL OF SIX, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AS WELL, KNEW ALL ALONG THAT SHE WAS A WOMAN, BUT KEPT THIS FACT SECRET WHILE CRUSHING THE HOUSES OF DOMAIN LORDS WHO HAD ONLY DAUGHTERS.
THE SENIOR COUNCILLORS ARE ALL OLD MEN OR MERE WOMEN. I FORESEE NO DIFFICULTY IN CUTTING THEM DOWN.


AS A RESULT THE CITY IS FILLED WITH LORDLESS SAMURAI WHO HAVE NO MEANS TO FEED THEMSELVES BUT TO SELL THEIR BODIES TO WOMEN. WARRIORS, REDUCED TO PROSTITUTION!
'TIS OUTRAGEOUS AND UNJUST!


AND ON TOP OF BEING A MAID, THE FOURTH SHOGUN, THIS IETSUNA, IS ONLY ELEVEN YEARS OF AGE!
BUT THAT, SIR, IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE. 'TIS PRECISELY BECAUSE SHE IS A CHILD, AND A MAID, THAT WE MAY ACT.

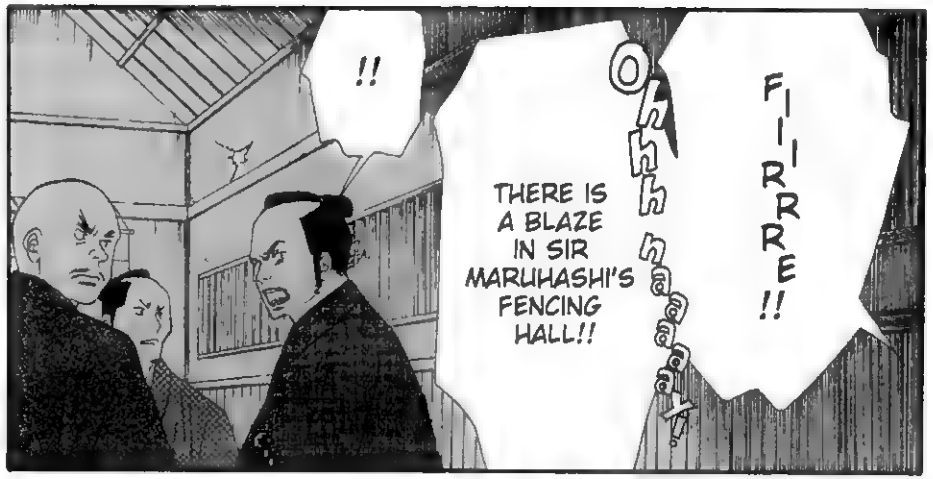
NAY, WE SEEK NOT TO TOPPLE IT!
WE MAY BE LORDLESS, BUT WE ARE SAMURAI AND WE ARE MEN. IF WE BAND TOGETHER, WE CAN TOPPLE THIS WEAKENED, FEMININE SHOGUNATE WITHOUT ANY EFFORT.


THE MINISTERS THAT RULE TODAY, THEY HAVE NO OBJECTION TO SERVING A FEMALE SHOGUN ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE BE NO MALE HEIR, AND YET THEY DID CRUSH OUR LORDS' CLANS ON THE SAME GROUNDS. NOW THAT WE ARE LORDLESS, THEY MOVE NOT A FINGER TO GIVE US PLACES IN THEIR BUREAUCRACY, BUT LEAVE US TO ROT. WELL, THEY SHALL PAY FOR'T!
WE SEEK ONLY TO SET THE SHOGUNATE BACK ONTO THE CORRECT PATH FROM WHICH IT HATH STRAYED!

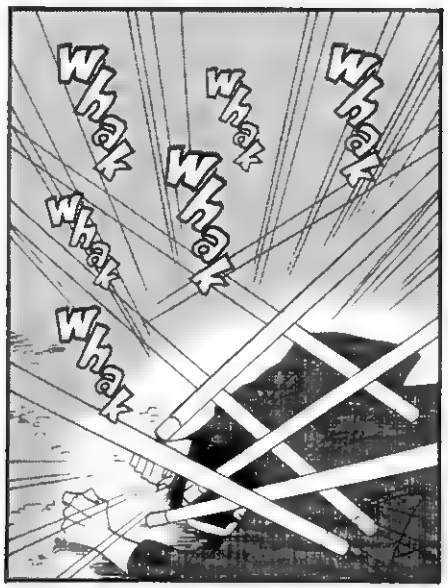
Hyaaaaaaaaagh!
FOR-SOOTH!
FOR-SOOTH!
SSH! KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN...
FOR-SOOTH!

THOU ART UNDER ARREST. THE SHOGUNATE'S MEN ARE ALREADY IN PURSUIT OF THY MASTER, YUI SHOSETSU, WHO WE KNOW IS HEADED FOR SUNPU. 'TIS JUST A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL HE TOO IS APPREHENDED.
MARU-HASHI CHUYA.
OHHH NAAA-AAY!

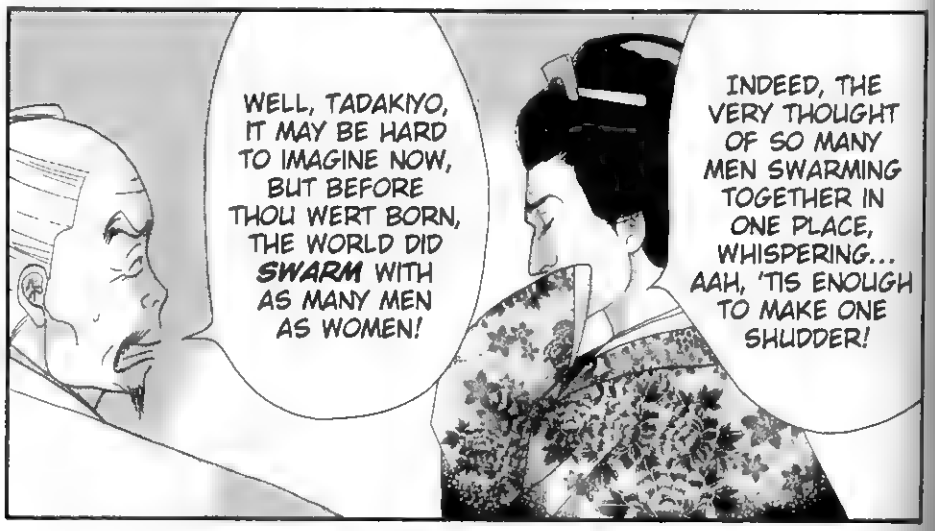
...I MUST SAY, THIS PLOT DID GIVE ME A GOOD SCARE, FOILED THOUGH IT WAS.


!!
THERE IS A BLAZE IN SIR MARUHASHI'S FENCING HALL!!
Ohhh naaaay!
FIIRRE!!

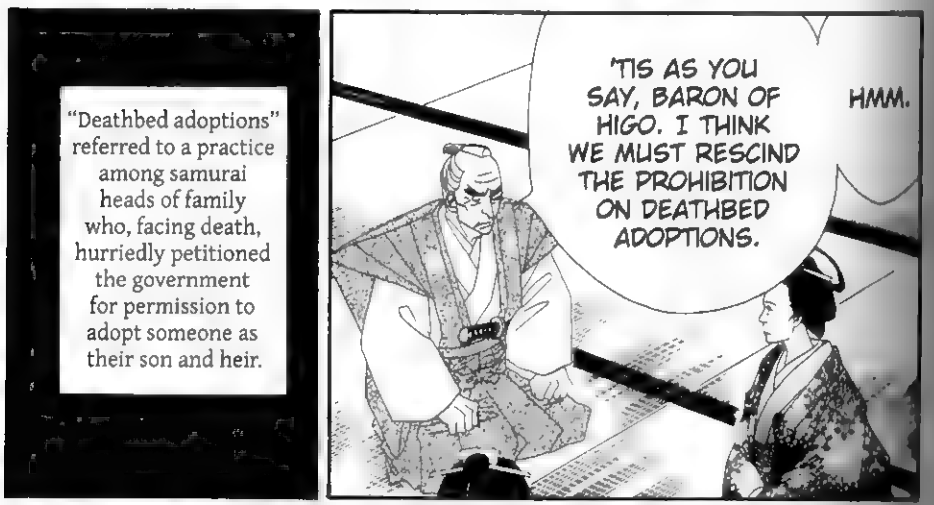
THE DOJO IS ON FIRE?!
Ka
tta

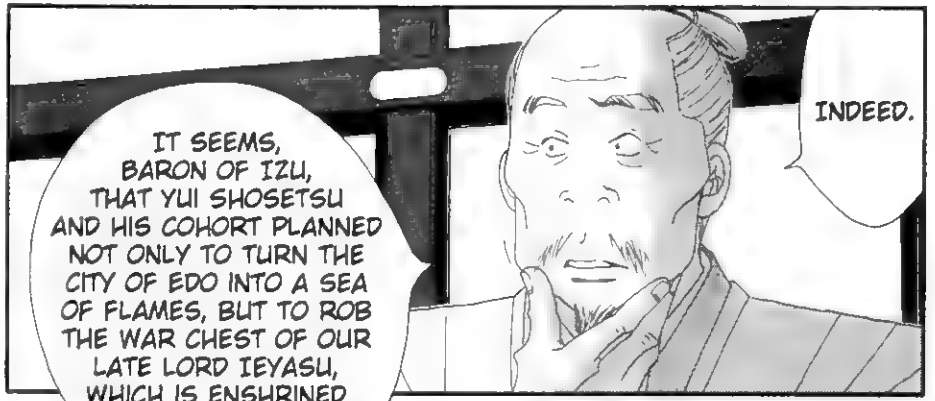

Whak
Whak
Whak
Whak
Whak
Whak

Hyaaaaaaagh!
thwak


WELL, TADAKIYO, IT MAY BE HARD TO IMAGINE NOW, BUT BEFORE THOU WERT BORN, THE WORLD DID SWARM WITH AS MANY MEN AS WOMEN!
INDEED, THE VERY THOUGHT OF SO MANY MEN SWARMING TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE, WHISPERING... AAH, 'TIS ENOUGH TO MAKE ONE SHUDDER!

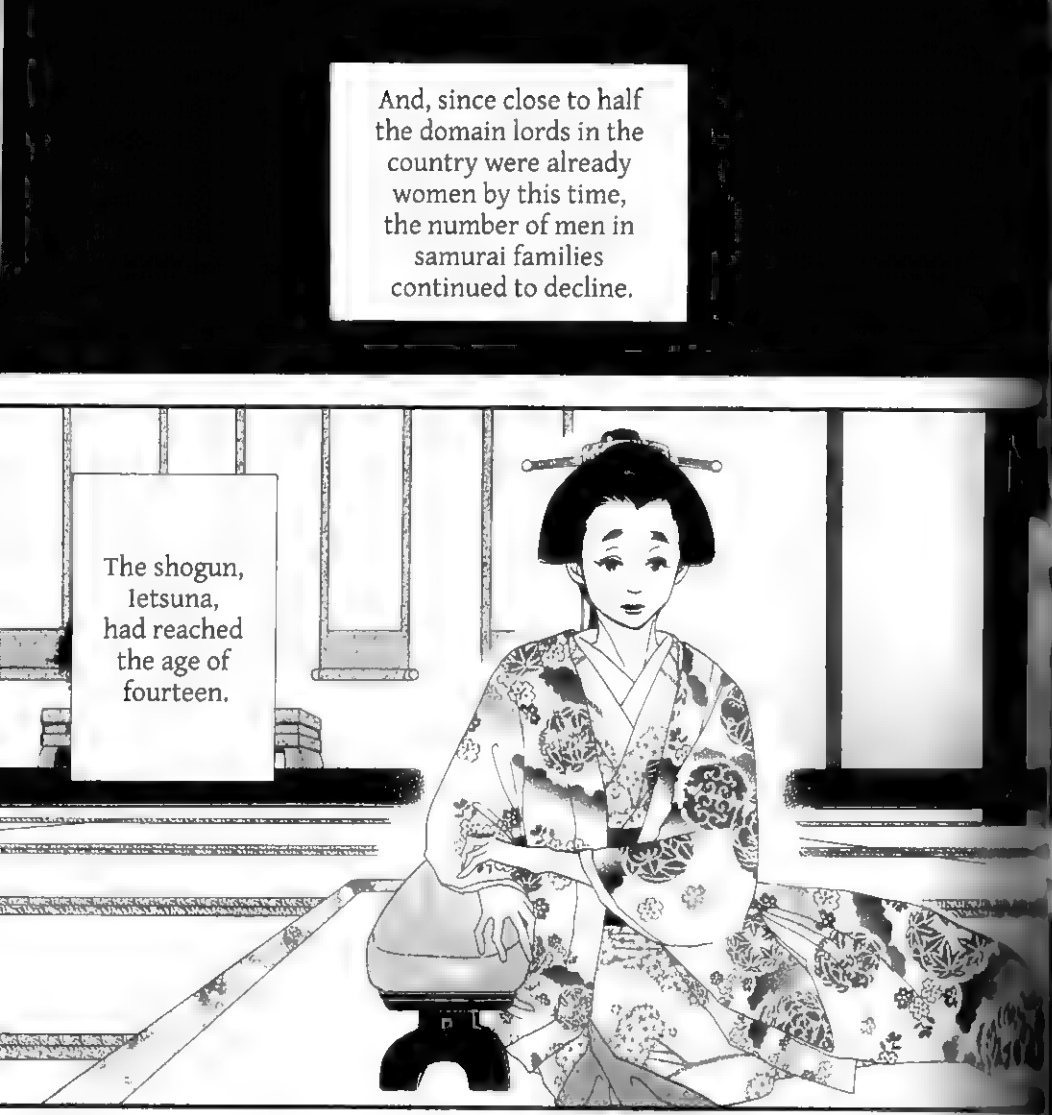
THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT FURTHER SUCH PLOTS AND INSURRECTIONS FROM OCCURRING IS TO STOP CREATING LORDLESS SAMURAI.
BUT BARON OF KAWACHI, I BELIEVE THAT SIMPLY TO BAN LORDLESS SAMURAI FROM EDO IS NO SOLUTION...


"Deathbed adoptions" referred to a practice among samurai heads of family who, facing death, hurriedly petitioned the government for permission to adopt someone as their son and heir.
'TIS AS YOU SAY, BARON OF HIGO. I THINK WE MUST RESCIND THE PROHIBITION ON DEATHBED ADOPTIONS.
HMM.

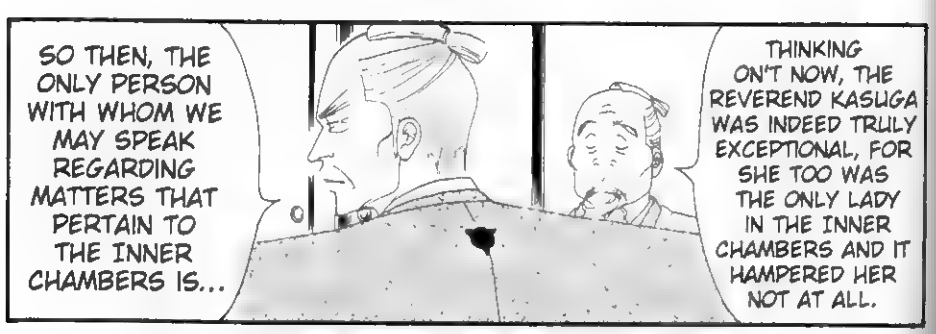

INDEED.
IT SEEMS, BARON OF IZU, THAT YUI SHOSETSU AND HIS COHORT PLANNED NOT ONLY TO TURN THE CITY OF EDO INTO A SEA OF FLAMES, BUT TO ROB THE WAR CHEST OF OUR LATE LORD IEYASU, WHICH IS ENSHRINED WITH OUR LORD AT KUNŌZAN.

FROM THERE, THEY WOULD PROCEED TO SUNPU CASTLE, JUST A STONE'S THROW AWAY, ASSAULT THE CASTLE AND TAKE IT, AND FROM THERE RULE OVER THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. THE PLOT WAS NOTHING LESS THAN TO OVERTHROW THE SHOGUNATE!

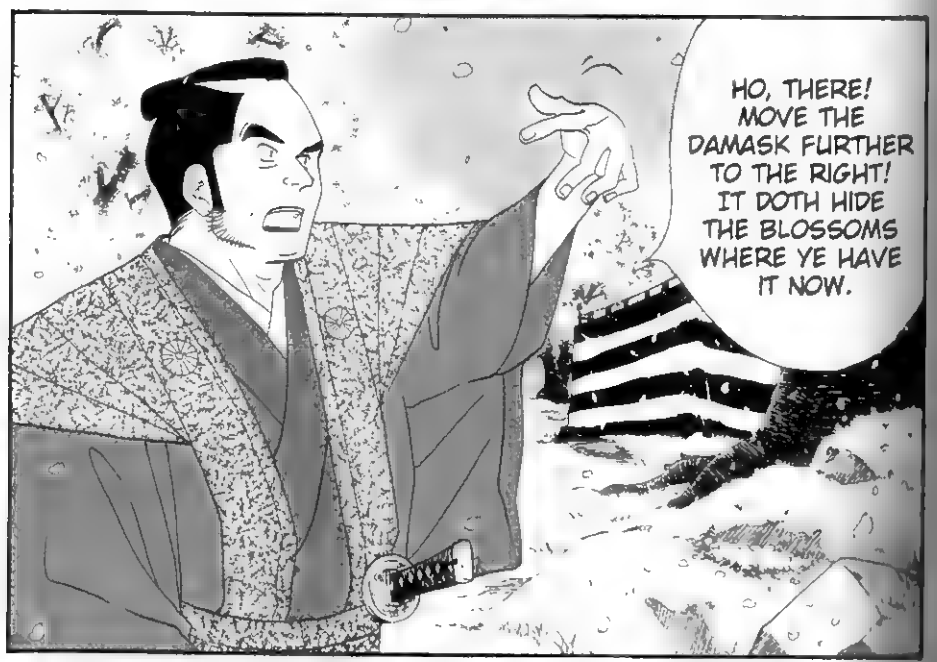
THIS IS WHY I HAVE BEEN SAYING THAT LORDLESS SAMURAI OUGHT TO BE BANNED FROM EDO!

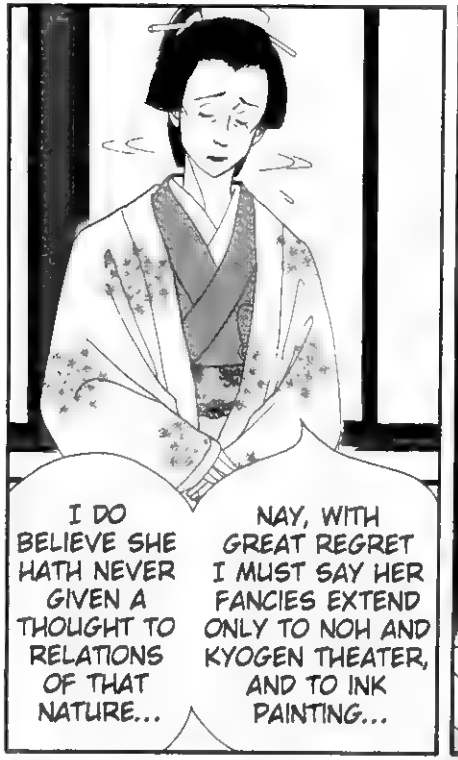

And, since close to half the domain lords in the country were already women by this time, the number of men in samurai families continued to decline.
The shogun, Ietsuna, had reached the age of fourteen.
AYE, IT HATH BEEN ARRANGED... HER BRIDEGROOM IS TO BE THE SON OF HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS PRINCE SADAKIYO. I BELIEVE HIS NAME IS...
WHAT OF HER HIGHNESS'S MARRIAGE?

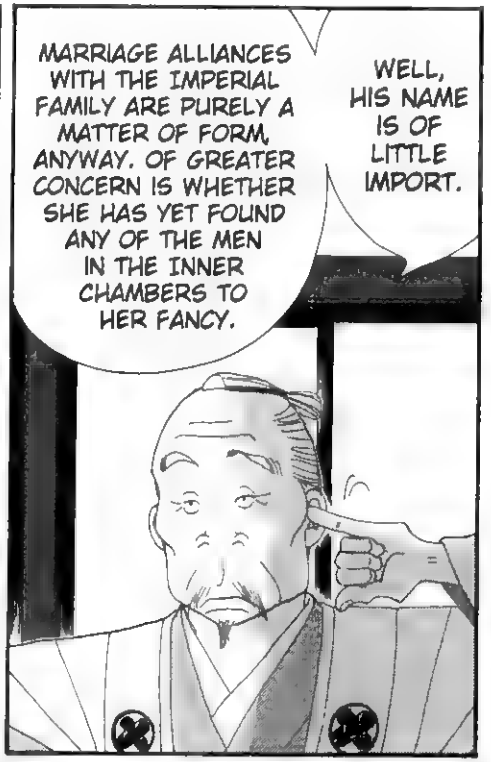
...the male population of the country remained stuck at one-fourth the female, and there were quite a few female lords who passed away without any surviving sons, and without finding a male heir.
Although the shogunate had been forced to recognize female lords as a stopgap measure...
This marked the transition from the rule of the sword, practiced by the Tokugawa so far in its ruthless crushing of rival clans, to the rule of law.
As a result, the shogunate had no choice but to recognize daughters as legitimate heirs, leading to a second generation of female vassals.


SO THEN, THE ONLY PERSON WITH WHOM WE MAY SPEAK REGARDING MATTERS THAT PERTAIN TO THE INNER CHAMBERS IS...
THINKING ON'T NOW, THE REVEREND KASUGA WAS INDEED TRULY EXCEPTIONAL, FOR SHE TOO WAS THE ONLY LADY IN THE INNER CHAMBERS AND IT HAMPERED HER NOT AT ALL.

THE SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN, O-MAN. LET US TURN TO SIR ARIKOTO FOR COUNSEL.
AYE.


HO, THERE! MOVE THE DAMASK FURTHER TO THE RIGHT! IT DOTH HIDE THE BLOSSOMS WHERE YE HAVE IT NOW.


I DO BELIEVE SHE HATH NEVER GIVEN A THOUGHT TO RELATIONS OF THAT NATURE...
NAY, WITH GREAT REGRET I MUST SAY HER FANCIES EXTEND ONLY TO NOH AND KYOGEN THEATER, AND TO INK PAINTING...


MARRIAGE ALLIANCES WITH THE IMPERIAL FAMILY ARE PURELY A MATTER OF FORM, ANYWAY. OF GREATER CONCERN IS WHETHER SHE HAS YET FOUND ANY OF THE MEN IN THE INNER CHAMBERS TO HER FANCY.
WELL, HIS NAME IS OF LITTLE IMPORT.

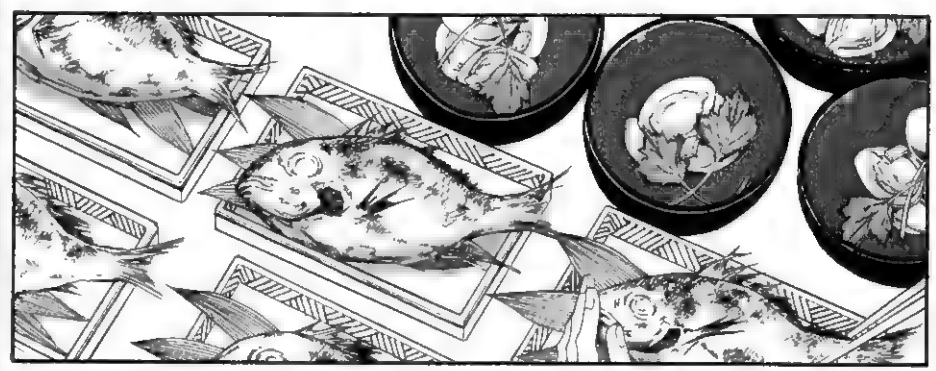
FROM WHAT I HAVE HEARD, SHE DOTH NOT BUDGE FROM HER OWN APARTMENT, FOR SHE IS NOW THE ONLY LADY IN THE INNER CHAMBERS AND FEELS NOT AT EASE IN THE COMPANY OF SO MANY MEN.
YAJIMA IS HARDLY THE SORT OF WOMAN WHOSE MIND EXTENDS TO SUCH MATTERS.

WHAT OF HER WET NURSE, LADY YAJIMA? PERHAPS SHE IS MAKING SOME ENDEAVORS IN THAT REGARD.

THE TASTER'S TASK IS TO CHECK WHETHER THE FOOD BE SAFE OR POISONED, NOT PLEASING OR INSIPID.
BUT AYE, 'TIS DELEC-TABLE.
HOW IS THE TASTE, SIR WADA? DOTH IT PLEASE YOU?

THESE STALLS ARE HERE FOR PLAY, AND DO NOT IN SOOTH TAKE MONEY FOR THE DUMPLINGS AND DENGAKU THOU SEEST, WHICH ARE GIVEN FREELY TO ALL THE DENIZENS OF THE INNER CHAMBERS.
AYE, HANABUSA. THOU ART NEWLY ARRIVED, SO THIS IS THY FIRST BLOSSOM VIEWING IN THE GARDEN OF FUKIAGE.
AH, I SEE THERE EVEN BE STALLS SELLING ALL MANNER OF VICTUALS, SIR MURASE.

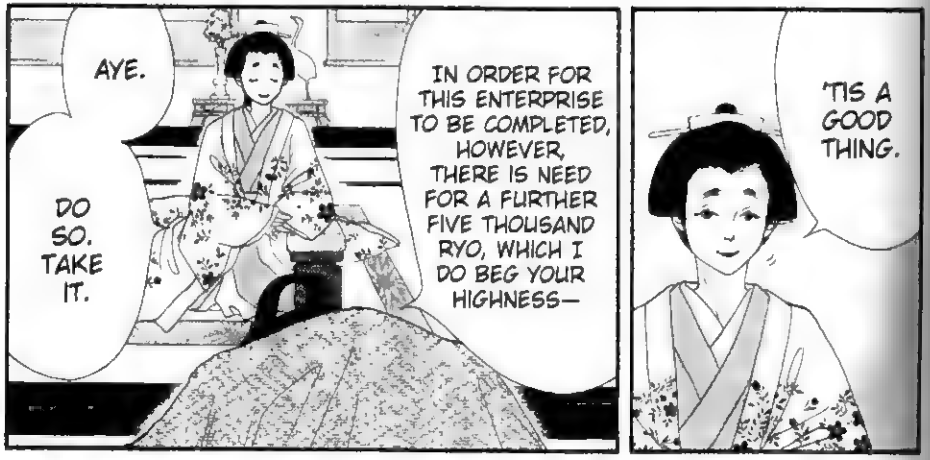
IS'T BETTER OVER HERE, SIR KATSUTA?
HMM. AYE, 'TIS GOOD THERE.



AYE, SIR SAWAMURA. WE HAVE MEN MOST VIGILANT IN EVERY CORNER.
I TRUST THE SAFETY OF BOTH GROUNDS AND CHAMBERS IS WELL GUARDED, NISHINA.

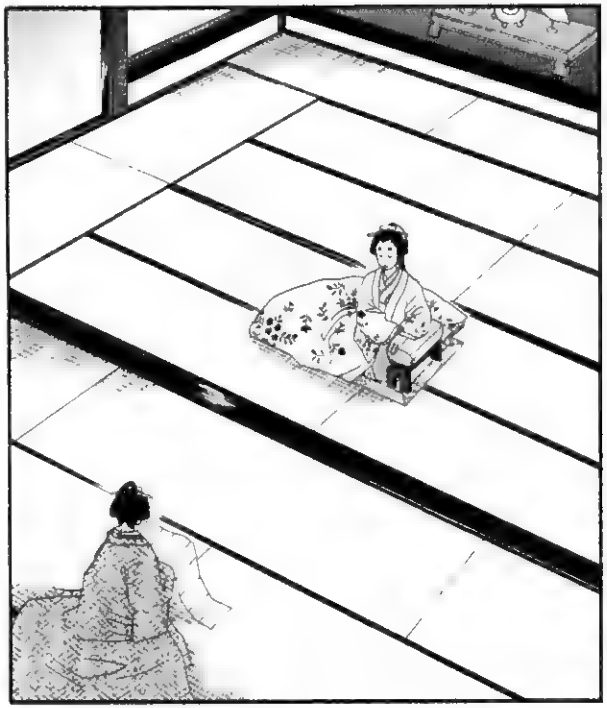
Arikoto was now thirty-three years old.

BUT...I WISH NOT TO MAKE SOMEONE STRANGE TO ME MY BRIDEGROOM.
YAJIMA DID TELL ME T'OTHER DAY...
...THAT I AM SOON COMPELLED TO TAKE A CONSORT FROM THE IMPERIAL FAMILY IN KYOTO.
I MYSELF DID COME HERE TO EDO FROM KYOTO, LONG AGO...
...BUT TODAY, I DO FEEL THAT MY TRUE HOME IS HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS OF EDO CASTLE.
AND THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE THAT YOUR HIGHNESS SHALL FIND HAPPINESS WITH THE YOUNG PRINCE YOUR CONSORT, IF NOT STRAIGHTWAY, THEN WITH TIME.
AYE.
...
VERILY?
...
ARI-KOTO.
...


AYE.
DO SO. TAKE IT.
IN ORDER FOR THIS ENTERPRISE TO BE COMPLETED, HOWEVER, THERE IS NEED FOR A FURTHER FIVE THOUSAND RYO, WHICH I DO BEG YOUR HIGHNESS—
'TIS A GOOD THING.

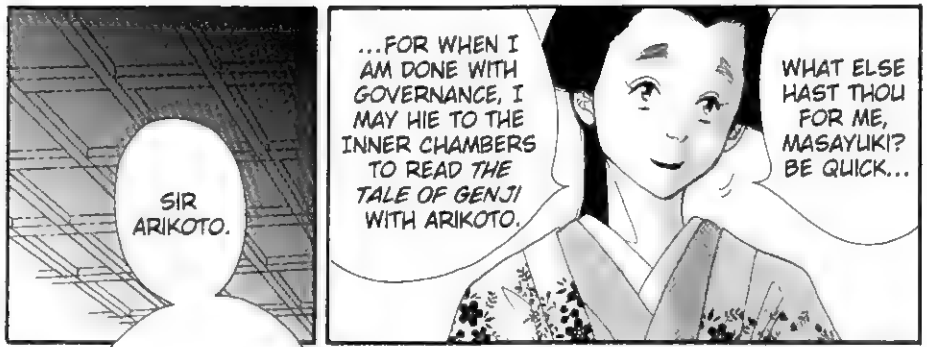
AYE.
DO SO.
ALSO, THERE IS MUCH TRAFFIC ON THE STREETS OF EDO OF LATE, AND WITH THE O-BON HOLIDAY SOON UPON US, 'TWOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO ORDER PATROL AND GUARD UNITS TO GO AROUND THE CITY DAY AND NIGHT, TO INCREASE VIGILANCE AND ARREST RUFFIANS...

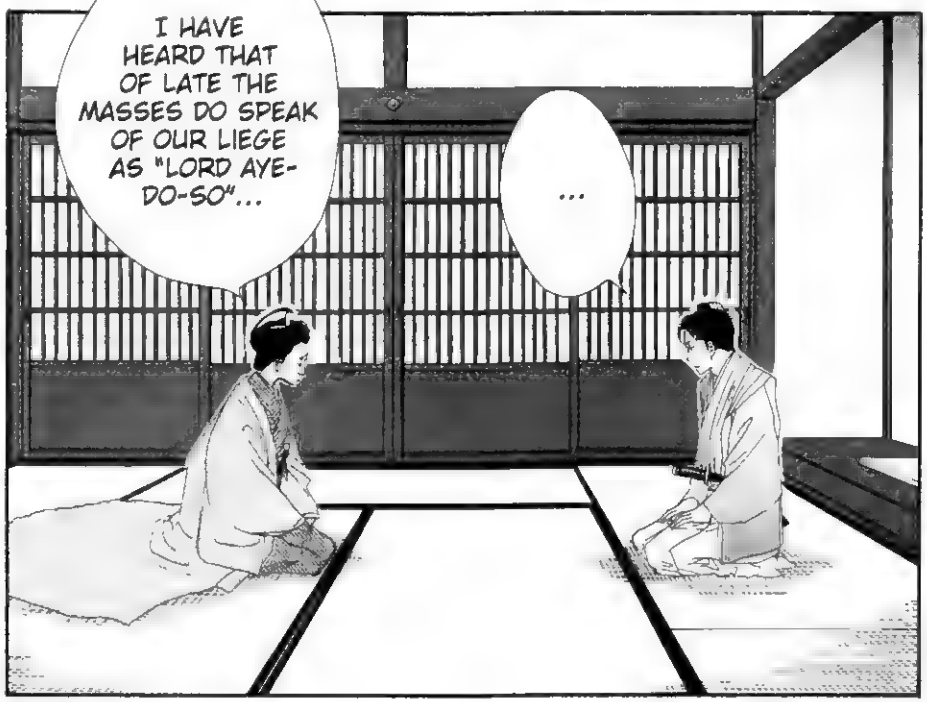
'TWOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO MOVE THEM ELSEWHERE, I EXPECT. AYE, DO SO.
Yaaaawn
AND WITH REGARD TO THE RIDING GROUNDS AND HORSE MARKET AT ROKUSHO SHRINE IN FUCHU, 'TWOULD BE—



...THE CANAL HATH NOW REACHED TORA-NO-MON, AND IF ALL DOTH GO AS PLANNED, 'TWILL BE COMPLETED BY THE SIXTH MONTH OF THIS YEAR, BRINGING FRESH WATER TO MUCH OF EDO.
WITH REGARD TO THE TAMA-GAWA AQUEDUCT, DIGGING FOR WHICH COM-MENCED LAST YEAR WITH INA TADAHARU AS THE MAGISTRATE IN CHARGE OF THE UNDER-TAKING...

By this time the Tokugawa system of using vassals to administer the various provincial domains and an efficient bureaucracy to craft government policies was in place, with highly competent ministers ensuring stable rule.


SIR ARIKOTO.
...FOR WHEN I AM DONE WITH GOVERNANCE, I MAY HIE TO THE INNER CHAMBERS TO READ *THE TALE OF GENJI* WITH ARIKOTO.
WHAT ELSE HAST THOU FOR ME, MASAYUKI? BE QUICK...

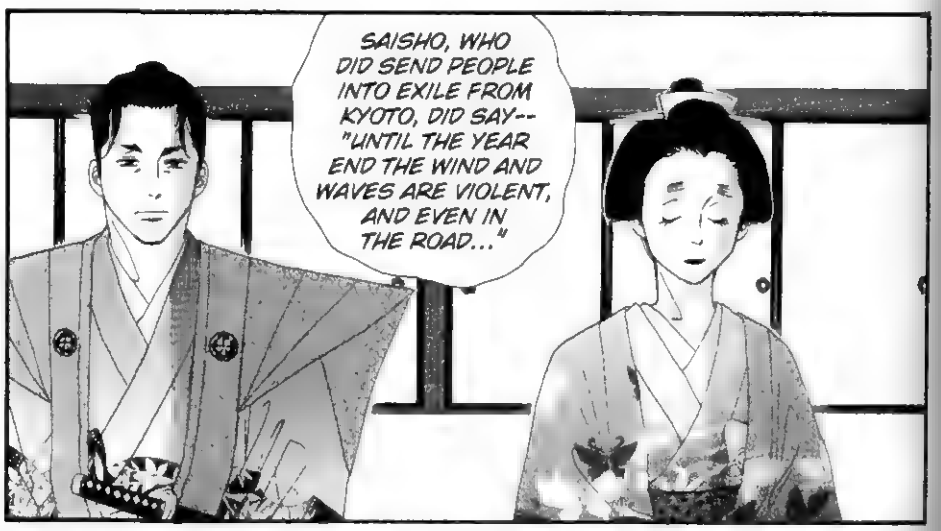

I HAVE HEARD THAT OF LATE THE MASSES DO SPEAK OF OUR LIEGE AS "LORD AYE-DO-SO"...
...

I DARESAY 'TIS TOO MUCH TO ASK THAT HER HIGHNESS BE LIKE HER HONORED MOTHER, LORD IEMITSU, BUT...
I TOO AM A PRODUCT OF THE TIMES—A WOMAN, AND YET NONE-THELESS A DOMAIN LORD WITH THE MANLY NAME OF HOSHINA MASAYUKI.

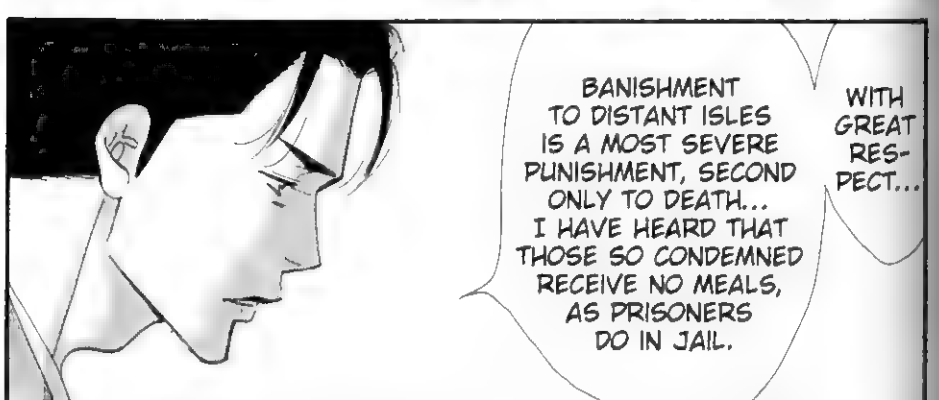
IF YOU WOULD SPEAK TO HER HIGHNESS, SIR, AND INSTILL AN INTEREST IN MATTERS OF STATE... FOR YOUR INFLUENCE UPON OUR LIEGE IS GREAT.
PRAY, SIR ARIKOTO, I BEG OF YOU TO COME TO OUR ASSISTANCE.
BARON OF HIGO.

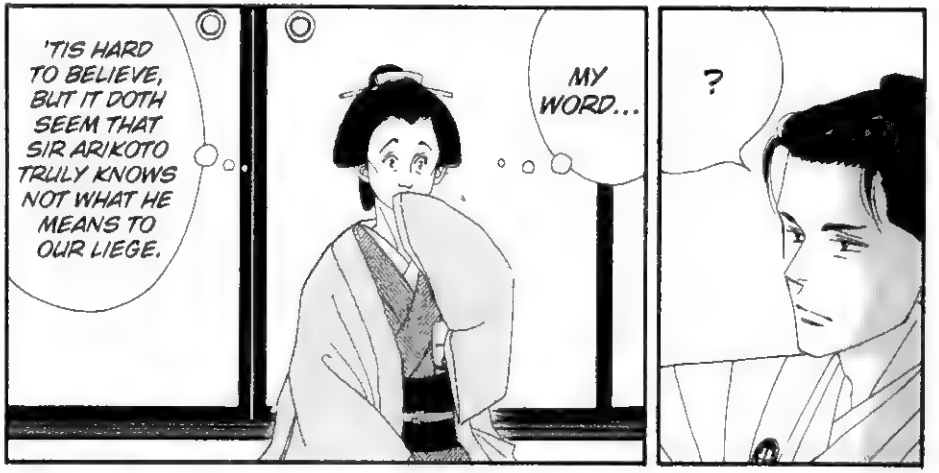
IN THE EYES OF OUR LIEGE, I AM NOTHING MORE THAN A GRANDDAD WHO DOTH JOIN HER IN GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS.
ALAS, I FEAR YOU PLACE TOO MUCH VALUE UPON MY POWERS OF PERSUASION.

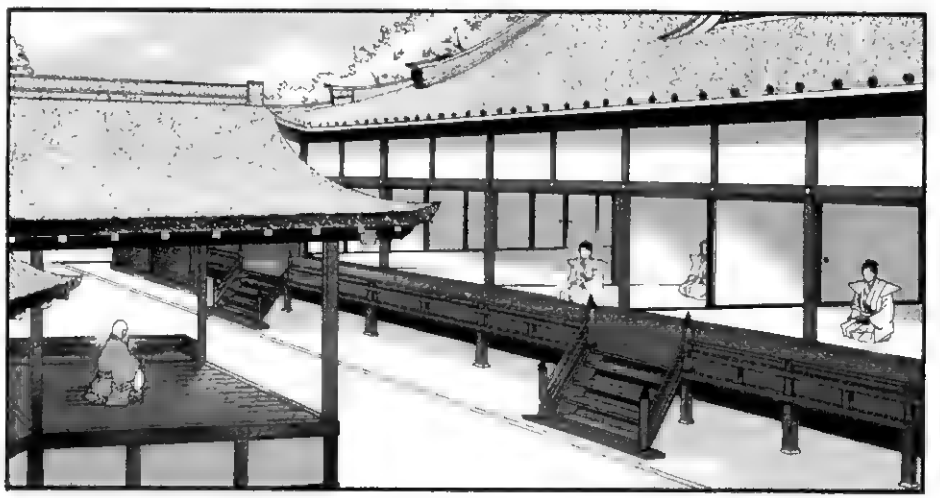
'PON MY TROTH, SIR ARIKOTO, SURELY YOU CANNOT IN SOOTH MEAN WHAT YOU SAY?
WELL.
INDEED, I BELIEVE THAT YOU, BARON OF HIGO, ARE FAR MORE SUITED TO THE TASK THAN MYSELF, FOR YOU ARE HER HIGHNESS'S GREAT-AUNT AND AS SUCH HOLD MUCH SWAY WITH HER.


SAISHO, WHO DID SEND PEOPLE INTO EXILE FROM KYOTO, DID SAY-- "UNTIL THE YEAR END THE WIND AND WAVES ARE VIOLENT, AND EVEN IN THE ROAD..."

M'LORD.
ARI-KOTO.
PEOPLE ARE E'EN NOW EXILED TO DISTANT ISLES LIKE SHUNKAN IS IN THE *TALE OF THE HEIKE*. WHAT DO SUCH PEOPLE EAT, I WONDER?

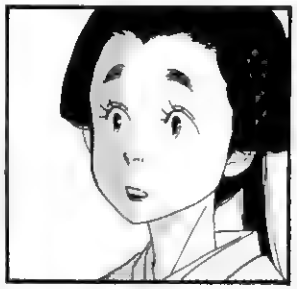

BANISHMENT TO DISTANT ISLES IS A MOST SEVERE PUNISHMENT, SECOND ONLY TO DEATH... I HAVE HEARD THAT THOSE SO CONDEMNED RECEIVE NO MEALS, AS PRISONERS DO IN JAIL.
WITH GREAT RES-PECT...

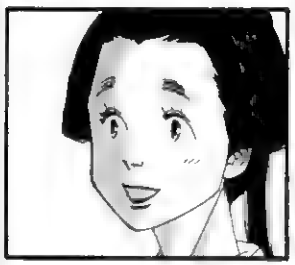

'TIS HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT IT DOTH SEEM THAT SIR ARIKOTO TRULY KNOWS NOT WHAT HE MEANS TO OUR LIEGE.
MY WORD...
?

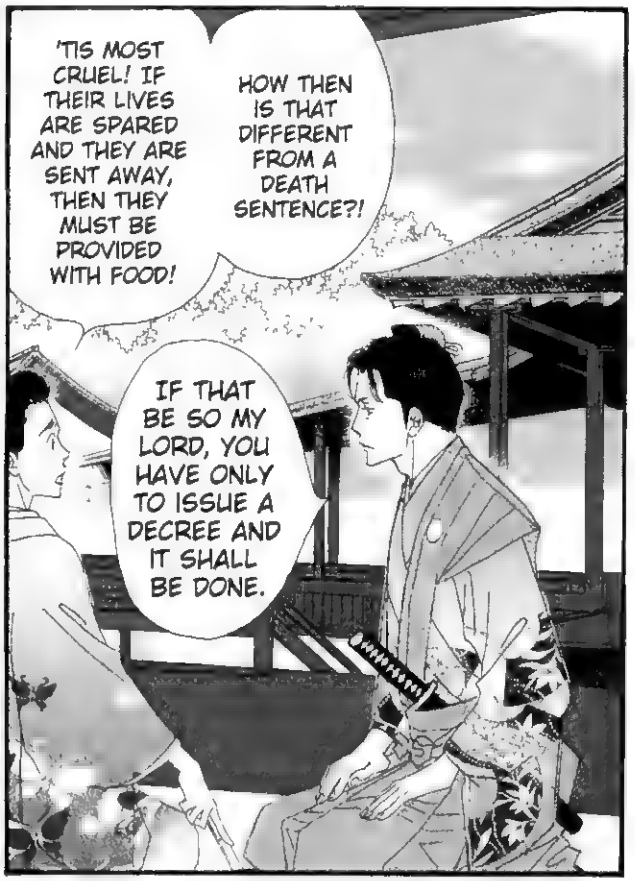


THESE PEOPLE DID LEAVE KIKAIGASHIMA AND ARRIVE AT KASENOSHO IN THE PROVINCE OF BIZEN, TERRITORY OF HEI SAISHO.
AND THEN...

SHUNKAN AND HIS COMPANIONS DID SURVIVE BECAUSE OF THE FOOD AND CLOTHING SENT TO THEM BY THEIR FAMILIES, BUT THOSE WHO ARE NOT SO FORTUNATE...
...!
BUT THEN... THAT MEANS THAT THOSE SENT INTO EXILE ARE CONDEMNED TO DIE OF STARVATION!





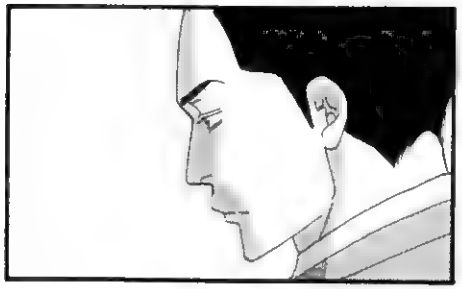

'TIS MOST CRUEL! IF THEIR LIVES ARE SPARED AND THEY ARE SENT AWAY, THEN THEY MUST BE PROVIDED WITH FOOD!
HOW THEN IS THAT DIFFERENT FROM A DEATH SENTENCE?!
IF THAT BE SO MY LORD, YOU HAVE ONLY TO ISSUE A DECREE AND IT SHALL BE DONE.

SOMEBODY!
NAY, MASAYUKI THE BARON OF HIGO WILL DO JUST AS WELL. CALL HER, SOMEBODY!
ENOUGH OF THE LUTE. CALL THE BARON OF IZU, I WISH TO SPEAK WITH HIM!

I AM MOST GRATEFUL, SIR ARIKOTO!
HER HIGHNESS HATH ALWAYS HAD A KIND AND COMPASSIONATE NATURE.

INDEED! INDEED!
IF ONLY SHE WOULD TURN HER THOUGHTS TO HER SUBJECTS, SHE WOULD SURELY BE A MOST SPLENDID SHOGUN, I AM CERTAIN!

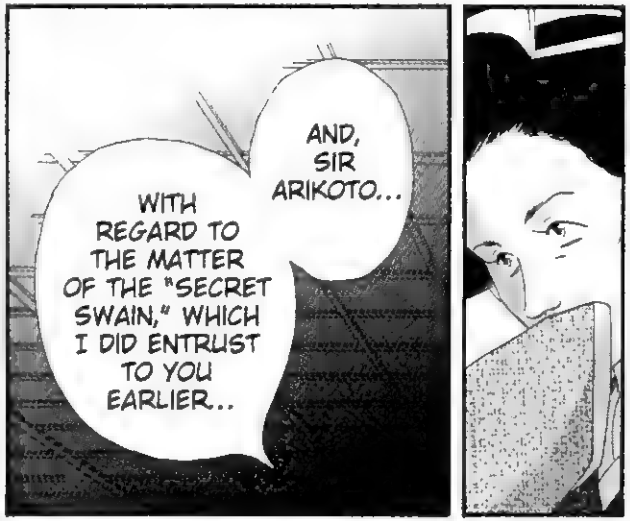
I SHALL HAVE THE SEMPSTERS MAKE HASTE TO TAILOR YOU A NEW ONE.
PERHAPS THE EMBROIDERY IS A LITTLE TOO BOLD— THE COLORS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A SHADE OR TWO PALER.

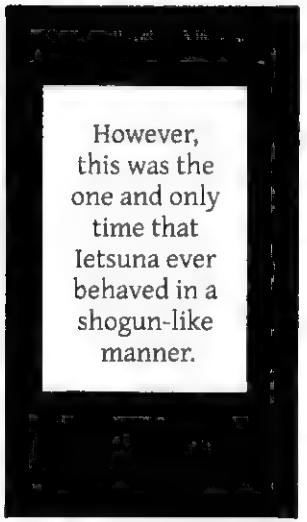


HM.

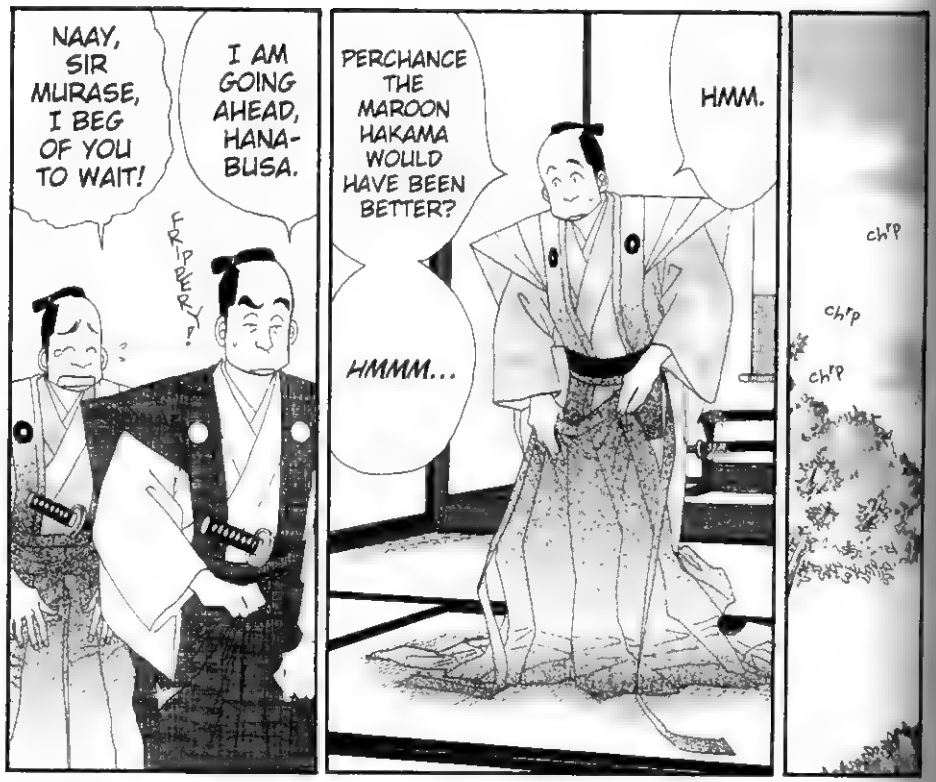
'TWAS I WHO DID PETITION YOU FOR THE HONOR OF BECOMING THE SECRET SWAIN.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SIR ARIKOTO?

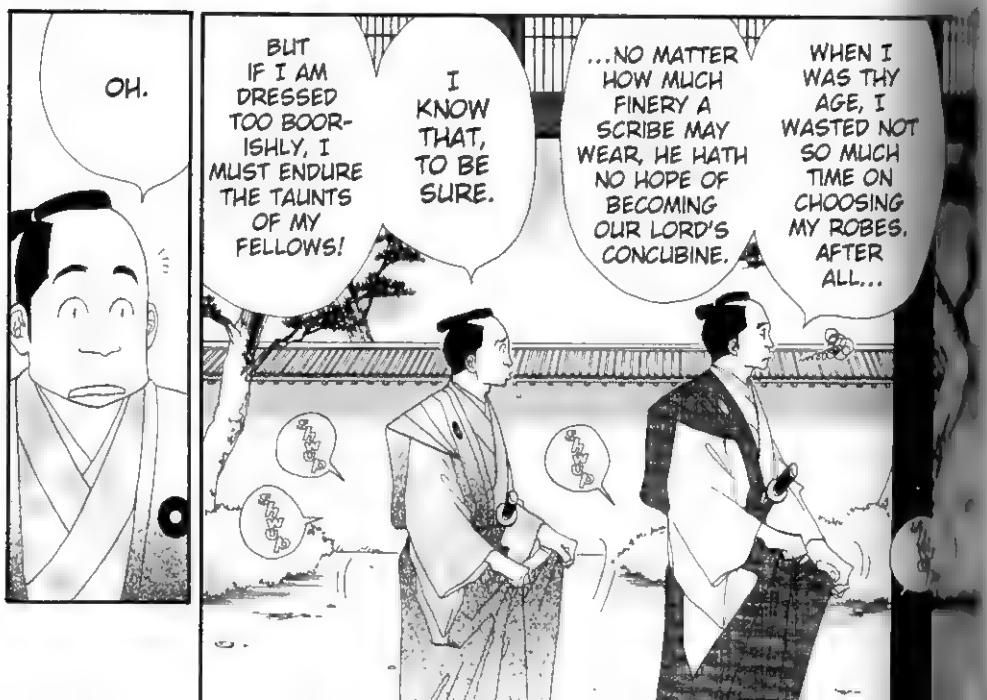
KURA-MOCHI.
...PRAY PARDON.

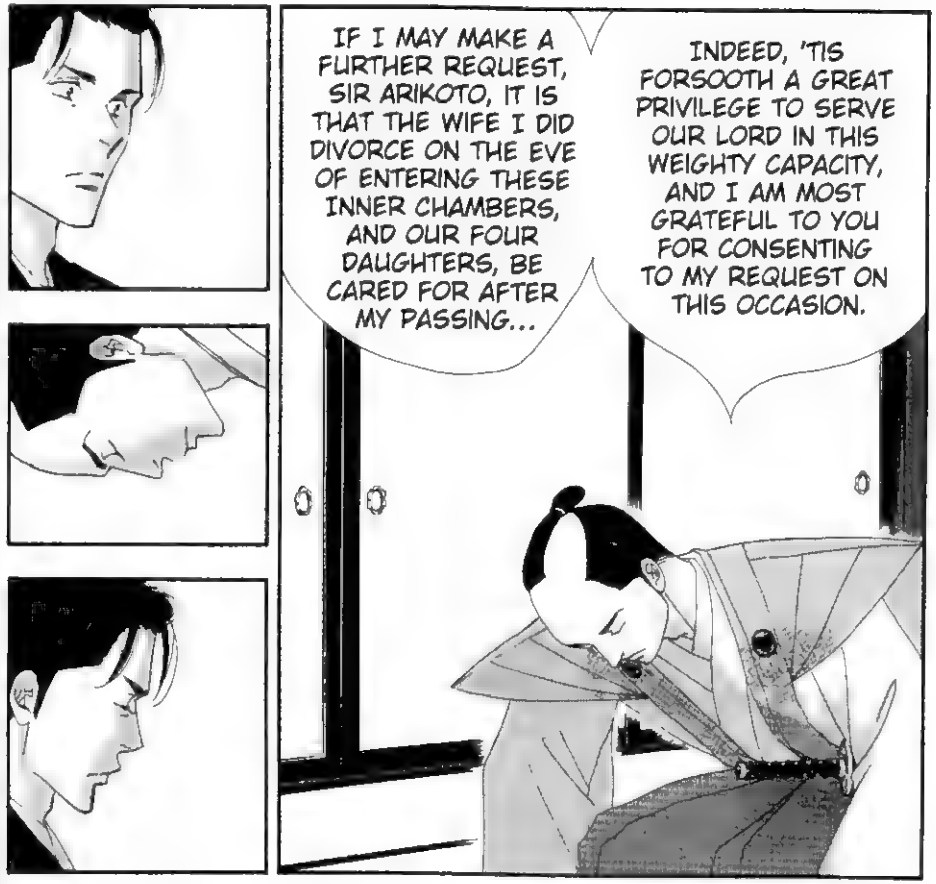

WITH REGARD TO THE MATTER OF THE "SECRET SWAIN," WHICH I DID ENTRUST TO YOU EARLIER..
AND, SIR ARIKOTO...


However, this was the one and only time that Ietsuna ever behaved in a shogun-like manner.

STAND UP, SIR.

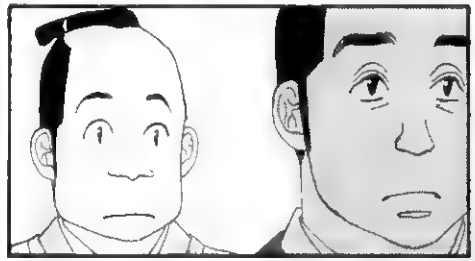

NAAY, SIR MURASE, I BEG OF YOU TO WAIT!
I AM GOING AHEAD, HANA-BUSA.
FRRRT!
PERCHANCE THE MAROON HAKAMA WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER?
HMMM...
HMM.
ch'p
ch'p
ch'p

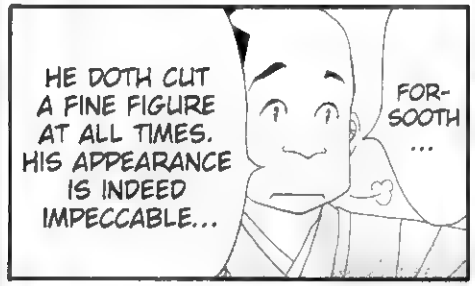

OH.
BUT IF I AM DRESSED TOO BOOR-ISHLY, I MUST ENDURE THE TAUNTS OF MY FELLOWS!
I KNOW THAT, TO BE SURE.
...NO MATTER HOW MUCH FINERY A SCRIBE MAY WEAR, HE HATH NO HOPE OF BECOMING OUR LORD'S CONCUBINE.
WHEN I WAS THY AGE, I WASTED NOT SO MUCH TIME ON CHOOSING MY ROBES. AFTER ALL...
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH

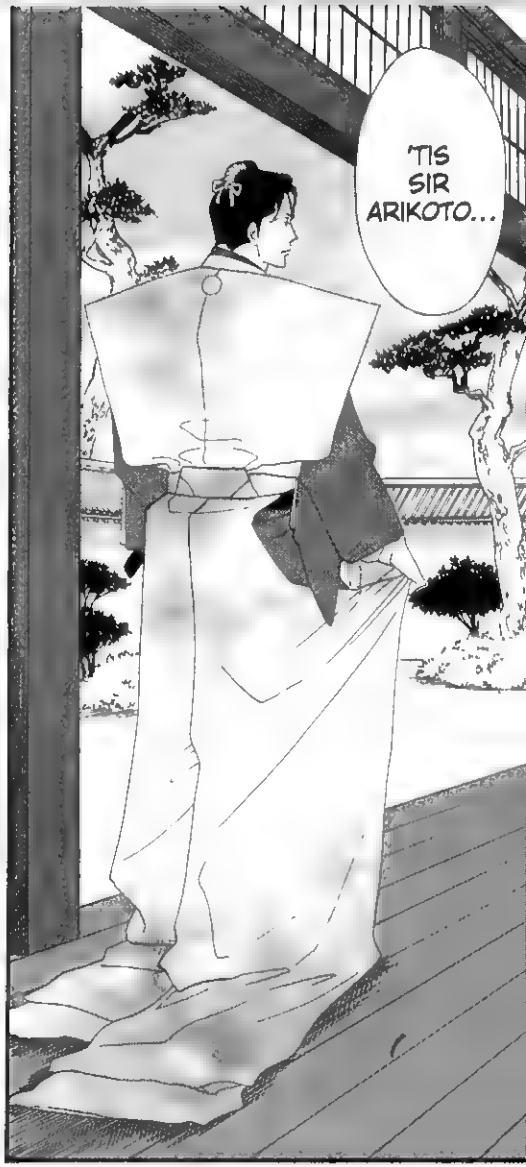

IF I MAY MAKE A FURTHER REQUEST, SIR ARIKOTO, IT IS THAT THE WIFE I DID DIVORCE ON THE EVE OF ENTERING THESE INNER CHAMBERS, AND OUR FOUR DAUGHTERS, BE CARED FOR AFTER MY PASSING...
INDEED, 'TIS FORSOOTH A GREAT PRIVILEGE TO SERVE OUR LORD IN THIS WEIGHTY CAPACITY, AND I AM MOST GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR CONSENTING TO MY REQUEST ON THIS OCCASION.

I PLEDGE IT SHALL BE DONE.

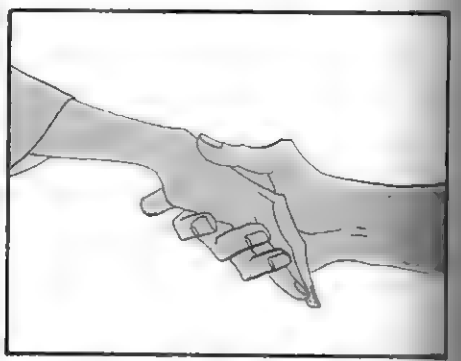
BOW YE DOWN FOR THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LIEGE!!



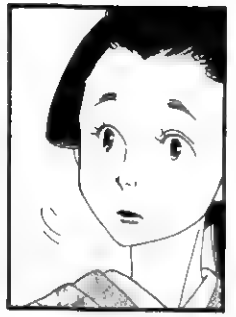

HE DOTH CUT A FINE FIGURE AT ALL TIMES. HIS APPEARANCE IS INDEED IMPECCABLE...
FOR-SOOTH ...

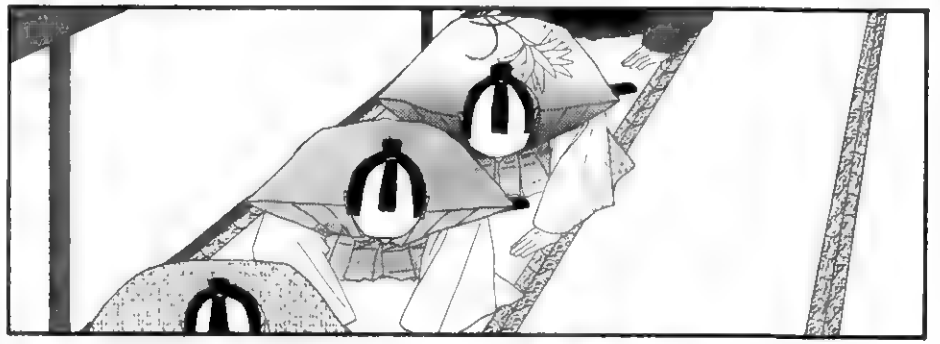

'TIS SIR ARIKOTO...

WHAT DOST THOU MEAN?
AH, NOTHING AT ALL.
I HAVE HEARD, SIR MURASE, THAT YOU ARE ONLY TWO YEARS OLDER THAN SIR ARIKOTO. COULD THAT BE TRUE?
...



THE PALE GRAY KAMISHIMO OVER A LIGHT GREEN KIMONO.

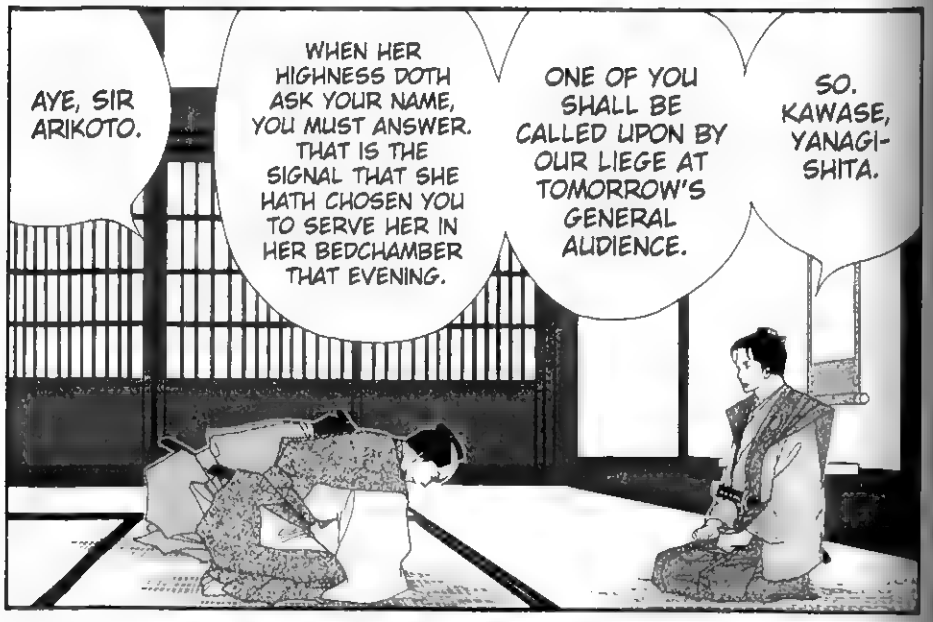




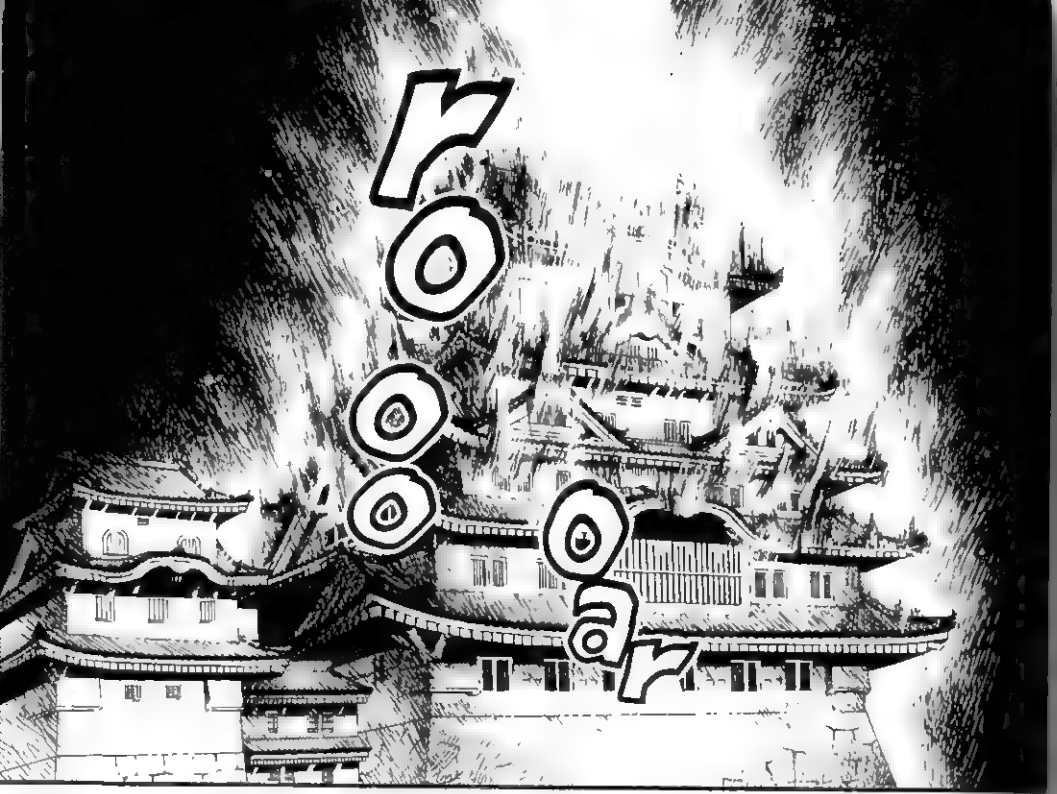
WHAT IS THY NAME?
THOU, IN THE PALE GRAY.

MY NAME IS KURAMOCHI, MY LORD.

It was the third year of Meireki (1657), soon after the New Year. A strong wind had been blowing all day.


AYE, SIR ARIKOTO.
WHEN HER HIGHNESS DOTH ASK YOUR NAME, YOU MUST ANSWER. THAT IS THE SIGNAL THAT SHE HATH CHOSEN YOU TO SERVE HER IN HER BEDCHAMBER THAT EVENING.
ONE OF YOU SHALL BE CALLED UPON BY OUR LIEGE AT TOMORROW'S GENERAL AUDIENCE.
SO. KAWASE, YANAGI-SHITA.

Kuramochi was executed the following morning.

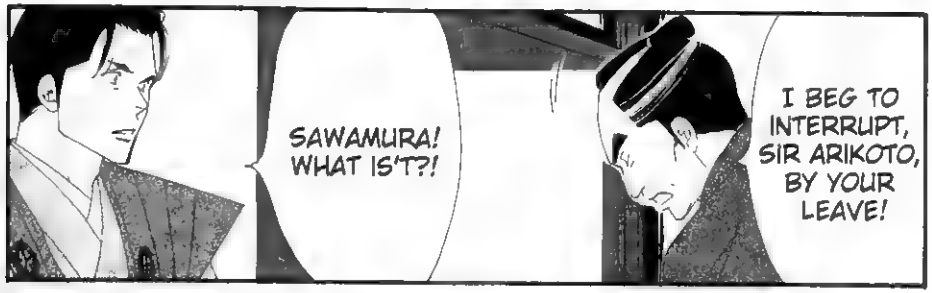

KOOOAR

WHEREFORE ARE YOU HERE?! THIS IS WHERE THE RESIDENTS OF THE INNER CHAMBERS ARE SHELTERING FROM THE FIRE!!
YOUR HIGH-NESS!
OH, GOOD...! THOU ART SAFE.
AYE, SIR ARIKOTO, BUT OUR LIEGE DID INSIST ON AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL, AND RE-FUSED TO MOVE AWAY FROM HERE UNTIL THEN.

ARI-KOTO ...!

SIR ARI-KOTO!
THERE DOTH SEEM TO BE SOME COMMOTION IN THE SHOGUN'S QUARTERS...
...?

I SUGGEST THAT YE BOTH RETIRE EARLY TONIGHT, SO YE ARE WELL RESTED AND—
...
MM.


SAWAMURA! WHAT IS'T?!
I BEG TO INTERRUPT, SIR ARIKOTO, BY YOUR LEAVE!

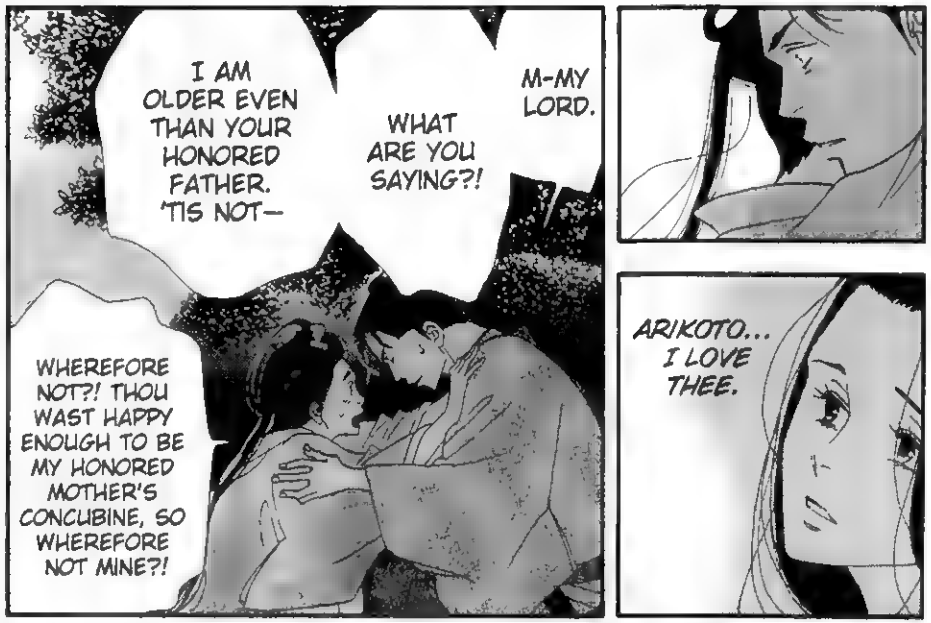
THE BLAZE DID BREAK OUT IN THE MARUYAMA AREA OF HONGO, AND HATH ADVANCED TO EDO CASTLE. THE CENTRAL ENCLOSURE ITSELF IS NOW ON FIRE!
FIRE, SIR!

I LOVE THEE...!!
ARIKOTO...

YOU, LADY YAJIMA, AND THE OTHERS MAY COME AFTER-WARDS!
I MUST HIE!
WELL, THE FIRST THING TO BE DONE IS TO TAKE HER HIGHNESS POSTHASTE TO THE PALACE IN THE WESTERN ENCLOSURE, WHICH IS FURTHEST FROM THE FIRE.
A-AYE, SIR ARIKOTO. I THANK THE GODS HER HIGHNESS IS IN GOOD HANDS.

I BEG YOUR PARDON, MY LIEGE! WHAT DID YOU WISH—
ARI-KOTO!
OH...!

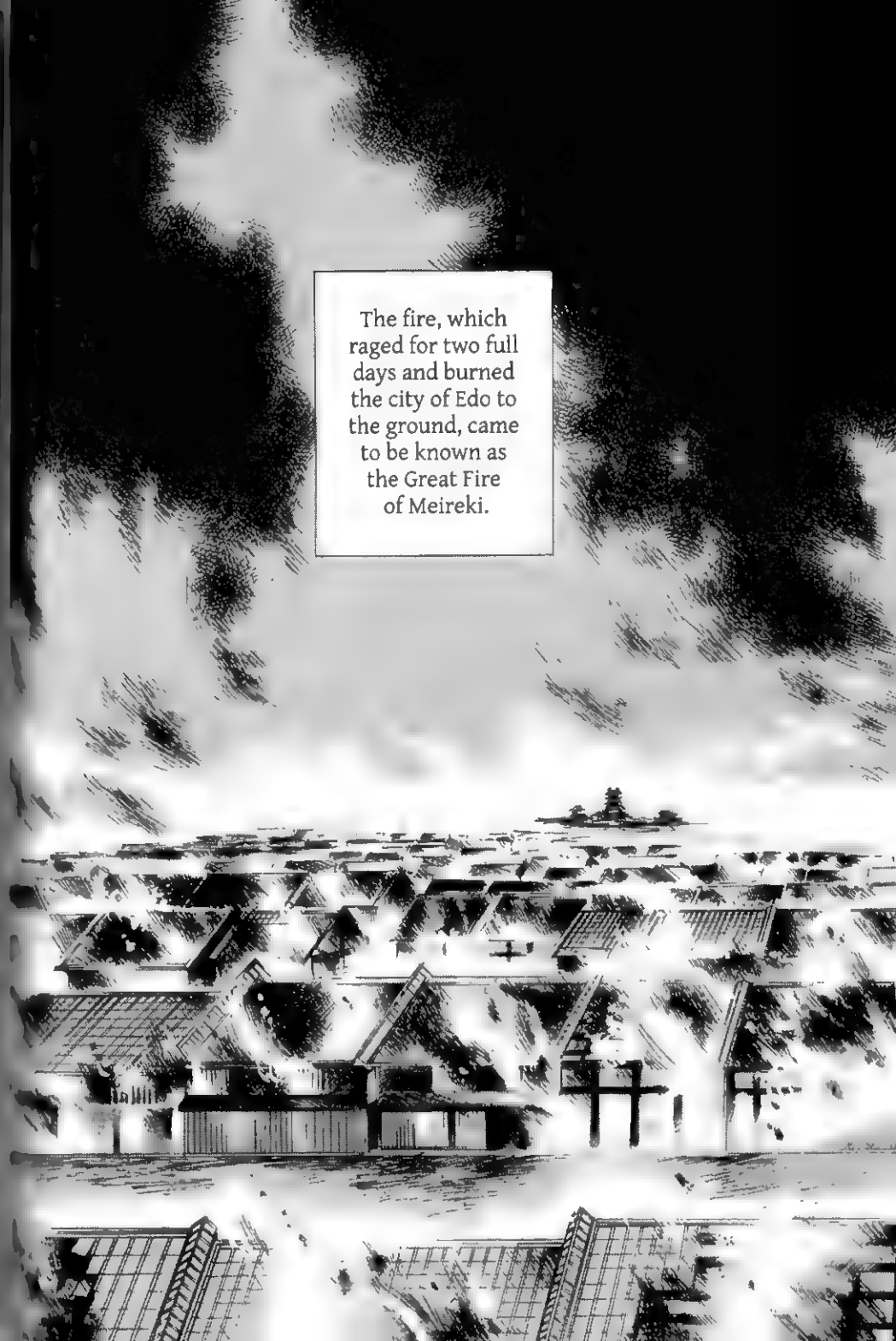
HOW MUCH OF EDO IS ABLAZE? HOW MANY HOUSES ARE BURNING?
THE SKY IS LIGHT ...
ARI-KOTO.

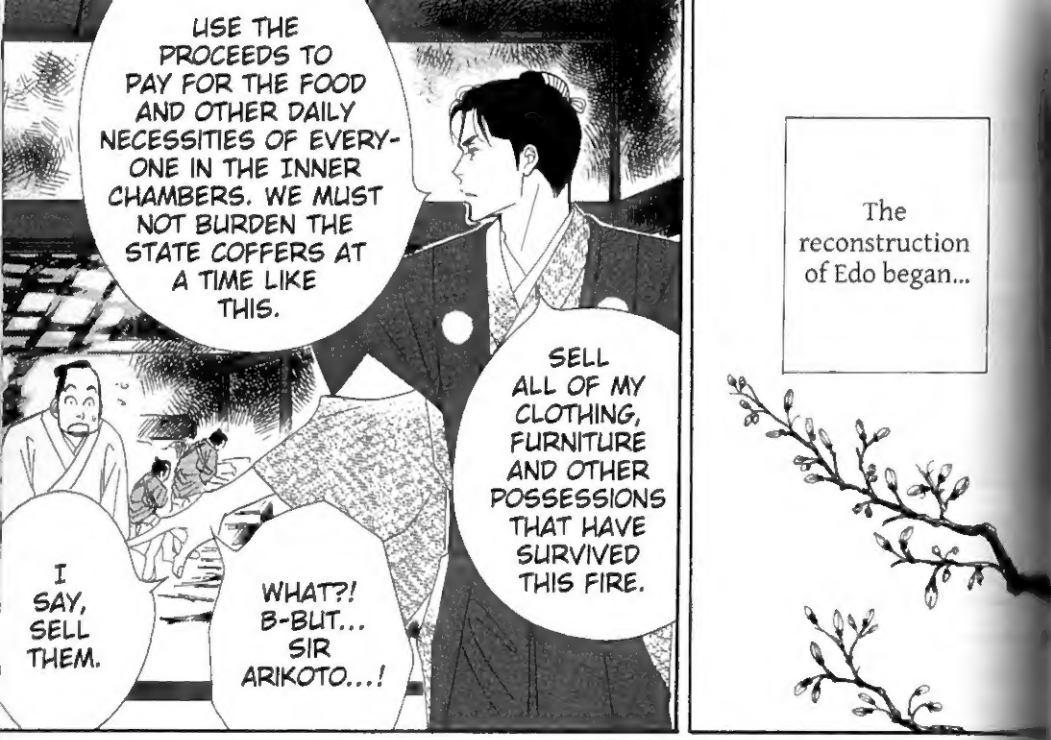

I AM OLDER EVEN THAN YOUR HONORED FATHER. 'TIS NOT—
M-MY LORD.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
WHEREFORE NOT?! THOU WAST HAPPY ENOUGH TO BE MY HONORED MOTHER'S CONCUBINE, SO WHEREFORE NOT MINE?!
ARIKOTO... I LOVE THEE.

IF 'TIS BECAUSE THOU HAST NO SEED, I CARE NOT ABOUT THAT, FOR I CAN HAVE CHILDREN WITH OTHER MEN. THOU HAST NO OBJECTION TO THAT, HAST THOU?!
I HAVE NE'ER HAD EYES FOR ANY MAN BUT THEE, ARIKOTO!! THOU ART BY FAR THE MOST HANDSOME OF ALL THE MEN IN THE INNER CHAMBERS, AND THE ONLY ONE FOR ME!!

INDEED, I DID SO WISH THAT THOU WOULDST BY MY FIRST COMPANION!
SO I DID THY BIDDING AND CHOSE THAT FELLOW INSTEAD! NOW THAT IS PAST, AND SO LONG AS I HAVE THEE, I WANT NO OTHER MAN!
BUT YAJIMA DID TELL ME THAT THE FIRST MAN I LIE WITH MUST BE PUT TO DEATH...

FIRST, WE MUST PROVIDE FOOD FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR HOMES...
...

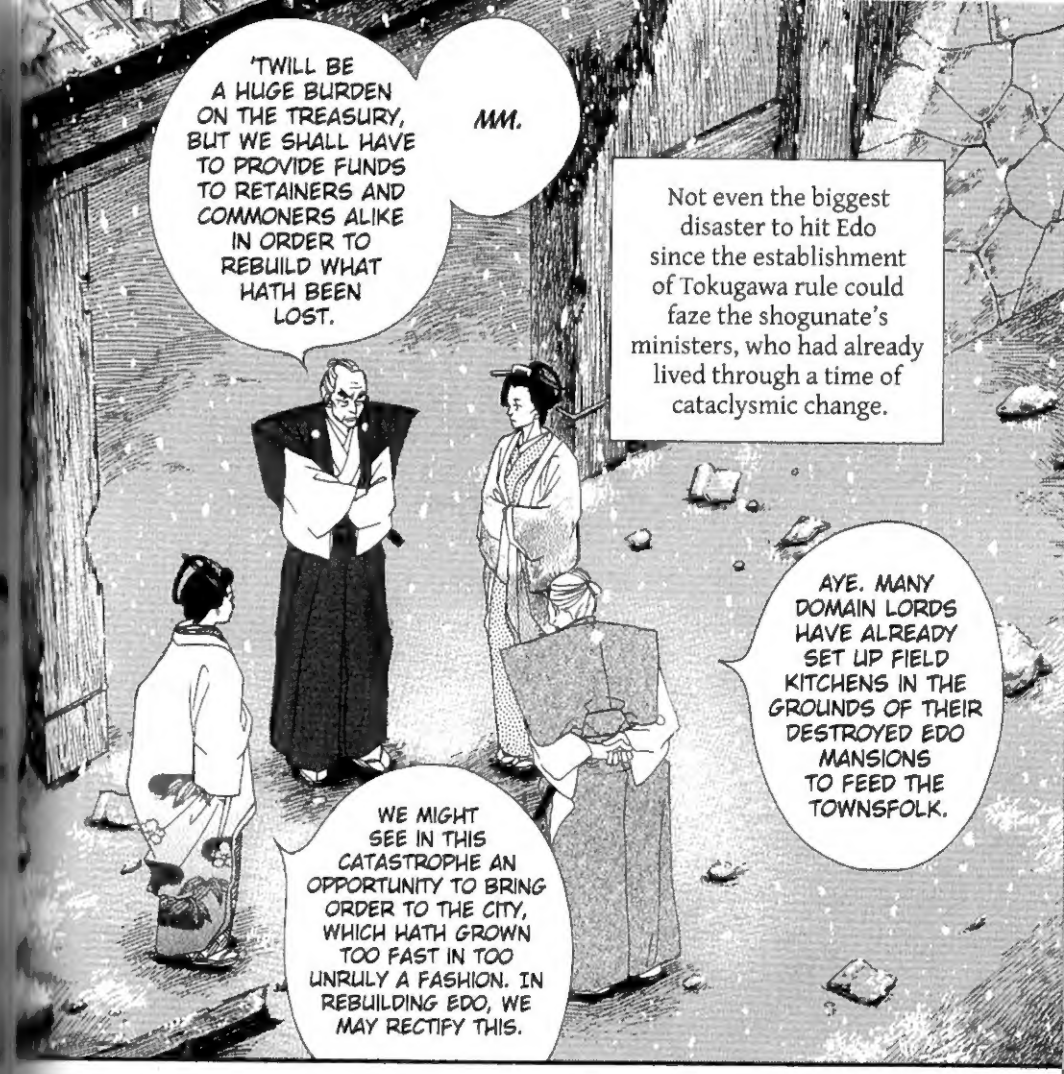

The fire, which raged for two full days and burned the city of Edo to the ground, came to be known as the Great Fire of Meireki.


USE THE PROCEEDS TO PAY FOR THE FOOD AND OTHER DAILY NECESSITIES OF EVERY-ONE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS. WE MUST NOT BURDEN THE STATE COFFERS AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
SELL ALL OF MY CLOTHING, FURNITURE AND OTHER POSSESSIONS THAT HAVE SURVIVED THIS FIRE.
I SAY, SELL THEM.
WHAT?! B-BUT... SIR ARIKOTO...!

The reconstruction of Edo began...

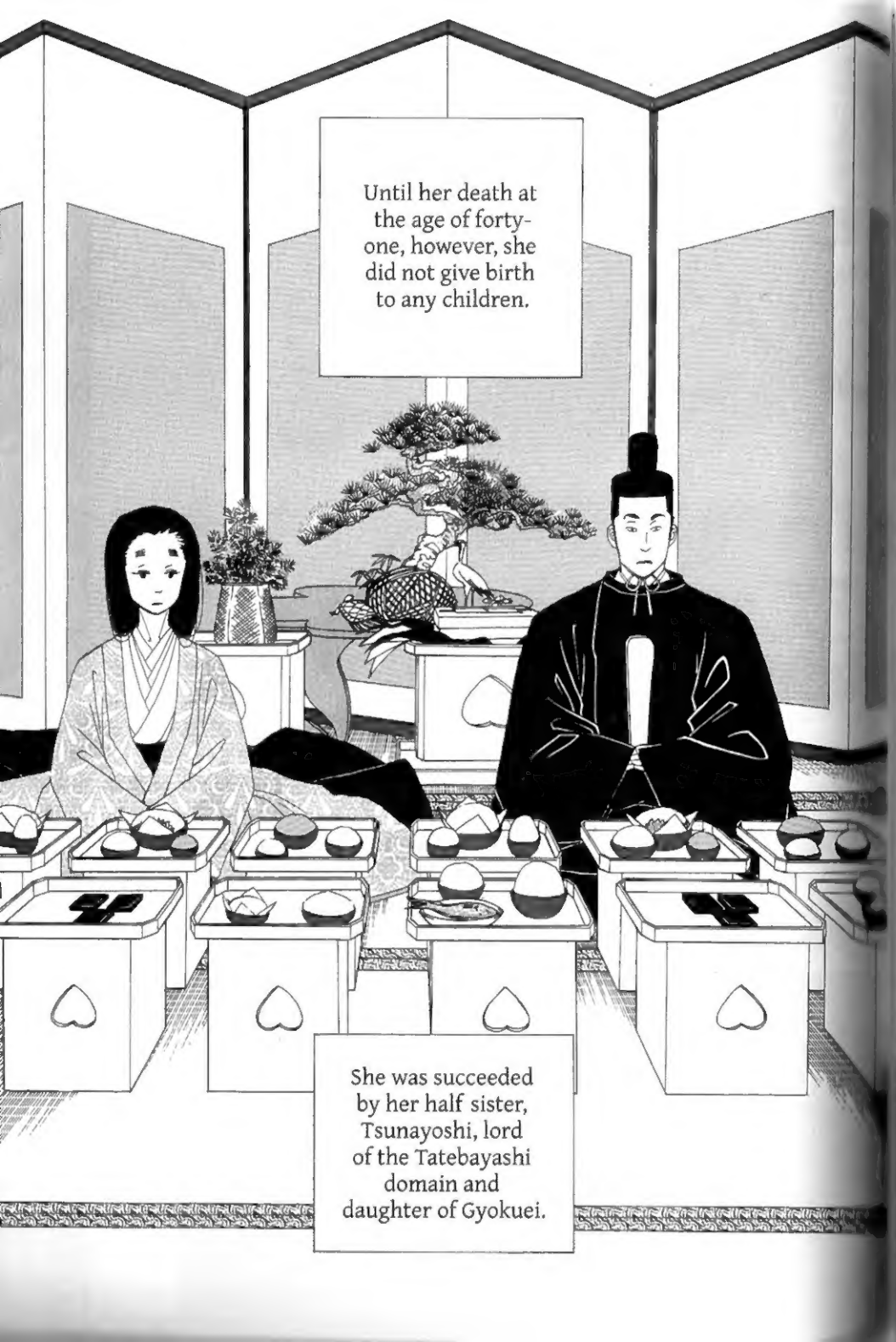
THOSE WHO ARE IDLE SHALL GO TO THE SEMPSTERS' CHAMBER TO LEARN THE USE OF A NEEDLE SO THAT THEY MAY HELP SEW ROBES, FOR THAT IS THE PLACE MOST SHORT-HANDED IN THIS PALACE FULL OF MEN.
WE SHALL HAVE TO RESIDE HERE IN THE WESTERN ENCLOSURE FOR SOME TIME. I EXPECT MANY WILL FIND THEMSELVES WITH LITTLE TO DO, FOR 'TIS A MUCH SMALLER PALACE THAN THAT TO WHICH WE ARE ACCUSTOMED.

...and the Inner Chambers too began somehow to function once more under the capable direction of its Senior Chamberlain, Sir Arikoto.


'TWILL BE A HUGE BURDEN ON THE TREASURY, BUT WE SHALL HAVE TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO RETAINERS AND COMMONERS ALIKE IN ORDER TO REBUILD WHAT HATH BEEN LOST.
MM.
Not even the biggest disaster to hit Edo since the establishment of Tokugawa rule could faze the shogunate's ministers, who had already lived through a time of cataclysmic change.
AYE. MANY DOMAIN LORDS HAVE ALREADY SET UP FIELD KITCHENS IN THE GROUNDS OF THEIR DESTROYED EDO MANSIONS TO FEED THE TOWNSFOLK.
WE MIGHT SEE IN THIS CATASTROPHE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING ORDER TO THE CITY, WHICH HATH GROWN TOO FAST IN TOO UNRULY A FASHION. IN REBUILDING EDO, WE MAY RECTIFY THIS.

O-MAN, THE SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN OF THE INNER CHAMBERS, ALSO KNOWN AS SIR ARIKOTO, HATH BEGGED TO BE DISMISSED FROM HIS DUTIES.

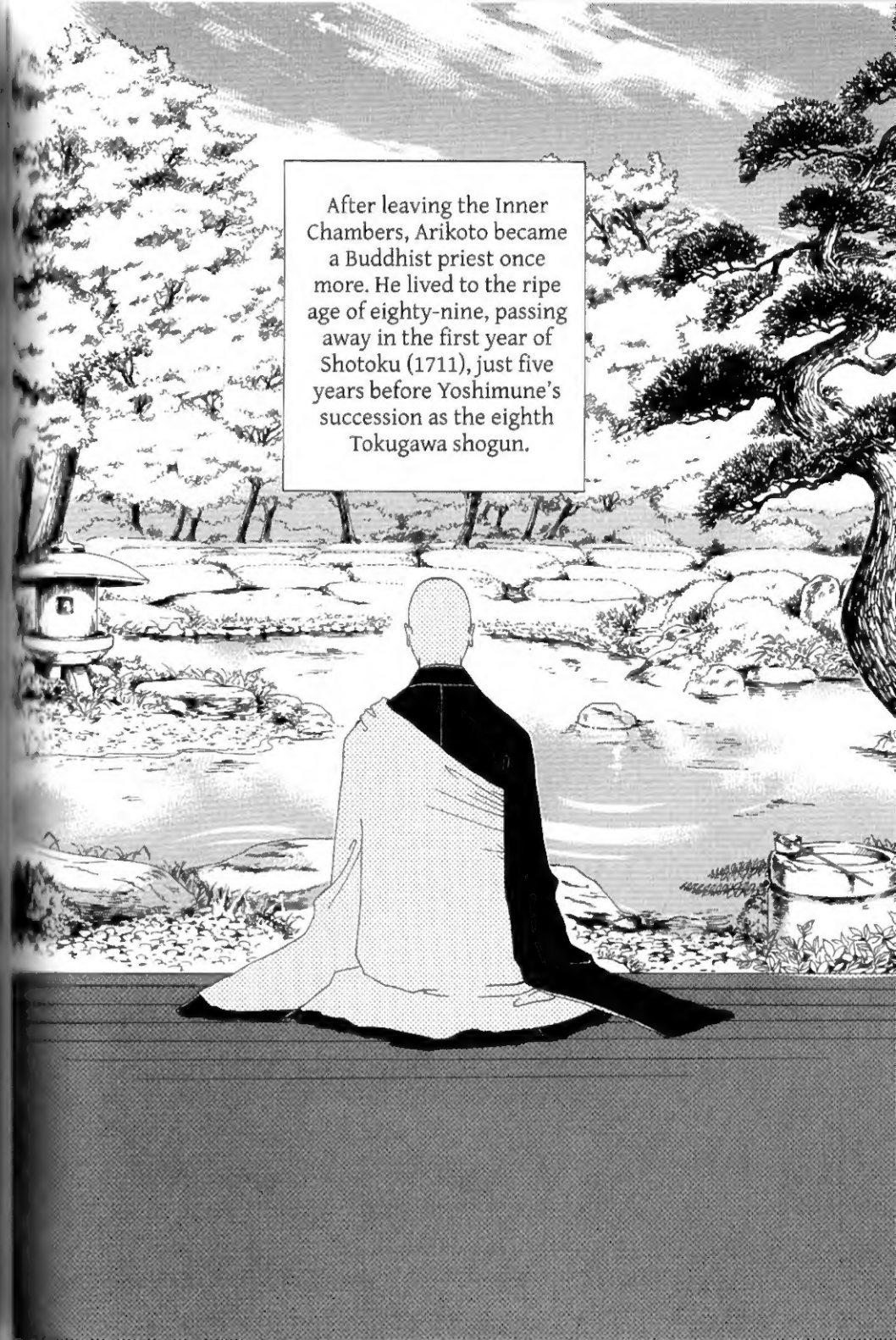
BARON OF HIGO...
And...
Among the many who lost their lives in this fire was one of the Ōoku's longest-serving attendants, Sawamura Den'emon.
I BEG OF YOU TO GRANT ME THIS MY EARNEST WISH, TO RETIRE IN PERPETUITY FROM SERVICE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS.
WHAT?!


Until her death at the age of forty-one, however, she did not give birth to any children.
She was succeeded by her half sister, Tsunayoshi, lord of the Tatebayashi domain and daughter of Gyokuei.

...VERY WELL.
In the eighth month of that year, the shogun Ietsuna took Prince Asanomiya Akifusa of the Imperial family in Kyoto as her consort.

Ōoku

● THE INNER CHAMBERS


After leaving the Inner Chambers, Arikoto became a Buddhist priest once more. He lived to the ripe age of eighty-nine, passing away in the first year of Shotoku (1711), just five years before Yoshimune's succession as the eighth Tokugawa shogun.